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PLAYING FOR RESISTANCE IN MMORPG:
OPPOSITIONAL READING, EMERGENCE, AND HEGEMONY IN THE *LINEAGE II*
“BARTZ LIBERATION WAR”

by

YOON SANG CHO

Under the Direction of Ted Friedman

ABSTRACT

Massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPG) open new worlds and new societies in the virtual space. Those worlds and societies rapidly expand and become important to the real world. Therefore, to understand them, this thesis examines the meanings and impacts of resistance in the MMORPG worlds and gaming culture from the case of an unprecedented grassroots revolution in *Lineage II*, which is called the “Bartz Liberation War.” By using the concepts of “oppositional reading,” “emergence,” and “hegemony,” this thesis examines how playing for resistance emerges and becomes dominant and explores the impact of resistance in both the gaming and real worlds. Also, this thesis shows the cultural struggle for hegemony in the game world and gaming culture as well as in the real world culture and politics.

INDEX WORDS: Massively multiplayer online role playing game, MMORPG, Lineage II, Bartz Liberation War, Long-Underwear Corps, Stuart Hall, Oppositional reading, Emergence, Hegemony, Playing for resistance

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YOON SANG CHO

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2012

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Yoon Sang Cho
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In the digital era, online games are opening up new worlds, providing the opportunity to move beyond interaction between computers and players and into interactions involving other players in a virtual world. The popular genre of massively multiplayer online role playing games (MMORPGs) particularly shows how new worlds and societies can be constructed by players. In these games, players create avatars that operate on their behalf in a virtual world. They can explore, hunt monsters, complete quests, and improve their ability levels. Cooperation and conflict between players is an important element driving their enjoyment of, and immersion in, MMORPGs. Individual social relationships in the worlds of even the simplest MMORPGs can develop into complex societies, and the games often involve unpredictable activities that go far beyond those envisioned by the original game designers. These virtual societies and social phenomena mirror those of the real world, involving economics, politics, culture, and even war and revolution.

As virtual game worlds get bigger and bigger, it becomes increasingly important to understand the characteristics of their worlds and societies, especially in terms of the situations that arise in them, how they arise, how they connect to the real world, and what they mean. In this case study, I will examine an unprecedented revolution in the MMORPG world in South Korea, which involved a resistance movement against a dictatorship. This is commonly known as the “Bartz Liberation War,” and occurred in a game called *Lineage II* (NC Soft, 2003). Examining this phenomenon can give us insight into the world of the virtual game.

1.2 The Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps

In June of 2004, a number of interesting news articles appeared in South Korean newspapers, online news services, and magazines, concerning a popular MMORPG, *Lineage II* (Baek, 2004; Kuk, 2004). In 2005, the famous novelist In-hwa Lee wrote an article entitled *On Lineage (Lineage-ron)* in a major news magazine, which concerned the fascinating story of the *Lineage II* world and a group known as the “Long-Underwear Corps” in Bartz Liberation War (2005a, August 1).¹

With the IT boom of the late 1990s, online gaming became popular in South Korea. In particular, the rise of the “PC bang” (Korean internet gaming cafes) and the rapid spread of high-speed internet service paved the way for the great successes of online games such as *Starcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 1998) and *Lineage I* (NC Soft, 1998). *Lineage I* was a popular fantasy MMORPG series, based on a series of popular South Korean comic books about the story of a prince who takes vengeance. It was developed and published by NCsoft in 1998, and gained great popularity.

Based on its success, on July 9, 2003, *Lineage II* made beta service available, immediately gaining the widespread participation of Korean gamers. Bartz is the first open server following the closed beta service. Server name “Bartz” came from a character’s name from the *Lineage* world. It was often called “the first server (*ilsub*),” and had the greatest number of players among all servers. The Dragon Knights (DK) clan, which was already organized from *Lineage I* and moved to Bartz server in *Lineage II*, showed powerful and skillful play during closed beta. DK was the first to reach the highest clan level (July 26) and conquer the boss monster core (August 14) from on all servers. In November, Akirus, who was one of the sub-

¹ The story of Bartz Liberation War is based on Lee (2005b), Myung (2008), Suria's blog (2008, December 15; December 18; December 26; 2009, January 4; January 18; January 18; January 25; February 6; March 1).

leaders of DK during the first Bartz Liberation War, and became a DK clan leader after the first war, was the first to reach the highest level (75) from among all servers. DK was the strongest clan in all of the *Lineage II* world.

In September, 2003, DK, Genesis, and Divine Knights (*Sinui Kisadan*)— the strongest clans on Bartz— formed a DK-led “Three Clans United (or DK United: *Sam Hyelmaeng Yonhap*).” They suppressed other clans and players, and subsequently dominated Bartz. They controlled the hunting fields and killed other players who entered there without permission, because, first, they wanted to monopolize game money and items from hunting mobs, and second, they wanted to deprive their future opponents of any opportunity to level up. Through the former, they could earn real money by gold farming.² They even used automated bots for leveling and gold farming.³ Through the latter, they could grow their characters easily and ensured their domination. Any player or clan who resisted or criticized them was killed by DK United, and many players stopped playing or moved to other servers or games. DK even massacred general players not only for purposes of domination but also for fun, and taunted and insulted many players. This is known as the DK dictatorship period of Bartz.

However, on May 8, 2004, the Red Revolution (*Bulguen Hyoekmyung*) clan captured Giran castle from DK United by surprise attack.⁴ The castle was very important in *Lineage II*, because it was a symbol of a clan’s power, and clan could earn game money by tax from trading of players.⁵ Red Revolution clan declared a zero percent tax rate in Giran castle in contrast to DK’s 15 percent tax rate. Many clans and players rejoiced over the victory, and expressed their

² Gold farming is the selling of in-game money and items for real money.

³ In *Lineage I*, dominating hunting fields and gold farming was common. DK learned it from *Lineage I* and after moving to the new world, *Lineage II*, used it to establish their monopoly.

⁴ Before capturing Giran castle, Red Revolution clan was famous for resistance to DK United. They fought a guerrilla war against DK and interrupted DK’s siege of Aden castle.

⁵ There are six castles in *Lineage II* in 2004. When Red Revolution clan was capturing Giran castle, DK had five castles and was laying siege at Aden, the most important castle in *Lineage II* world. After the liberation of Giran, DK succeed to capture Aden castle, and then attacked Giran castle.

willingness to support the Red Revolution clan. However, DK United was still too strong and captured Giran castle again on May 23.

Giran was just one of the six castles, but liberation of the castle had a profound impact on many players in Bartz. First, Red Revolution and many other clans could form the “Bartz Alliance” to resist to DK domination. Second, due to an internal conflict of DK United, the Genesis clan— one of the main factions of DK United and infamous for brutal massacre in Bartz— surrendered to and participated in the Bartz Alliance. Following this, the “First Bartz Liberation War” broke out, but the Bartz Alliance was still weaker than DK United. However, an unprecedented situation occurred on June, and the Bartz Alliance was saved. This situation was the appearance of the “Long-Underwear Corps (*Naebokdan*)”



Figure 1 The Long-Underwear Corps.

The “Long-Underwear Corps” had a revolutionary new type of player in MMORPG. At least 500~1000 players participated in the Long-Underwear Corps everyday during the war. Their jocose name was derived from their appearance. They were low level characters (about level 10), and equipped with basic weapons and armor—frequently, only using bone daggers and squire’s shirts and pants. This gave players the appearance of wearing long underwear or long johns (*naebok* in Korean), so they were called Long-Underwear Corps. Their tactics were various and creative. The main tactic was the human wave attack—hundreds of players’ concentrated attack only one or two of DK’s strong players at a time. They killed healers firstly, buffers second,⁶ then other fighters or mages lastly, because even a strong fighter could not endure low level characters’ *en-masse* attack without healers and buffers.⁷ Also, they blocked the road to interrupt DK force’s maneuvers when Bartz Alliance Force was capturing DK’s castles and hunting fields. During the battle, the Long-Underwear Corps volunteered to protect Bartz Alliance Force’s healers and archers as a human shield, gave false information to DK force by a character whose name was similar to the DK’s leader’s, requested one-to-one trade to interrupt DK player’s control, and so on.

The most important meaning of Long-Underwear Corps was the resistance of grassroots players against the dominant power. Without the Long-Underwear Corps, the war might be just a conflict between power clans, which is common in MMORPG. In the Bartz server, most players were low or middle level players, and they were regarded as being grassroots in *Lineage II*.⁸

Mostly, they were not interested in the war between power clans, but rather in the case of the

⁶ Healers recover the avatar’s health points, and buffers provide spells that strengthen the avatar’s ability. See page 43.

⁷ In fact, a massive attack of low level characters could not damage strong high level characters because of their high defensive power. However, the Long-Underwear Corps invented a new way of attack with the “mortal blow” skill, which could damage 30~40 HP with a certain possibility, regardless of the enemy’s defensive power. See Chapter 3.

⁸ According to statistics of Bartz server on November 25, 2003, 85.9 percent of players were below level 40. At that time, players over level 55 could join strong clans—in case of DK clan, being over level 61~65 was required (Lee, 2005b, pp. 83-84).

Bartz Liberation War; they did not show an attitude of indifference, but actively participated in the war for resistance against the dominance. So, with their appearance and tactics, they were often compared with the “sans-culottes” in the French Revolution (Lee, 2005b, p. 93).

Furthermore, not only players of Bartz, but also players from other servers or other games participated in the Long-Underwear Corps for the resistance. It was a really remarkable situation, because this defied the dominant Korean online game culture, in which most of players wanted to be strong and to hold a superior position in the game (Lee, 2005ab; Suria, 2008, December 26).

Despite the participation of the Long-Underwear Corps, DK United was still too strong. The brutal war continued for a month. However, many players were deeply moved by the appeals and activities of Bartz Alliance and Long-Underwear Corps and joined the war. With the Long-Underwear Corps' remarkable activities, the Bartz Alliance could capture DK's castles and seized the chance for victory. Surprisingly, Akirus, who was the strongest character in *Lineage II*, was killed by the Long-Underwear Corps human wave attack during the siege of Oren castle. Eventually, on July 17, 2004, the Bartz Alliance laid siege to Aden castle, the capital of *Lineage II* world. In the beginning of the battle, the Bartz Alliance seemed too weak to fight with DK. DK forces easily defeated the Bartz Alliance forces in Aden castle and launched a fierce counterattack on Oren castle. However, the Bartz Alliance planned a deception operation—their main forces waited in ambush to capture Aden castle. During the siege of Oren castle by DK, Bartz Alliance's main forces made a surprising attack on Aden castle. DK forces realized the seriousness of the situation and pulled back to Aden castle. However, during DK's retreat, the Long-Underwear Corps blocked the way with human barricades. Even the main forces of DK

could not reach Aden castle due to the sacrifice of the Long-Underwear Corps. Finally, DK United was defeated and lost Aden castle. Bartz Alliance declared, “It is Bartz Liberation Day!”

Despite Bartz Alliance’s victory, the First Bartz Liberation War is regarded as a failed revolution. After the Bartz Alliance’s successful siege of Aden and other castles, DK United lost most of their castles and hunting fields and hid out at the “Tower of Insolence.” However, the Bartz Alliance was divided due to the trophies of triumph—castles and hunting fields—and some Long-Underwear Corps players were corrupted to become bandits. Internal conflict even broke out between the Red Revolution clan and Revenges clan, which were the most important forces of Bartz Alliance. These conflicts undermined the legitimacy of the war, and many players disappointed by them. Players from other servers who participated in the Long-Underwear Corps returned to their original worlds. DK’s new leader, Akirus, did not miss a chance to revive DK. On December 19, 2004, DK recaptured their lost castles and the hunting field. During the internal conflict, many clans and players of the former the Bartz Alliance surrendered to revive DK. On January 27, 2005, the second DK dictatorship began, and the Bartz Alliance collapsed completely. The second dictatorship and its revenge were more brutal than the first, but it also encountered strong resistance from the players in Bartz. Additionally, DK suffered serious internal conflicts between sub-clan leaders. Finally, the DK clan divided and was dismissed in 2006. At last, on March 31, 2007, the Second Bartz Liberation War broke out to sweep the remnants of DK. Like in the first war, the “Solidarity of Neutral Clans (*Joongrib Yeondae*)” organized and the Long-Underwear Corps appeared again, and they won the war after a heroic victory in the battle of Monastery of Silence.

This story—in particular, the First Bartz Liberation War—became a Korean internet and gaming legend. The events of the Bartz Liberation War were unprecedented in MMORPGs, and

are now regarded as the best example of digital storytelling in South Korea (Lee, 2005ab). They threw the spotlight on MMORPGs as new outlets for digital storytelling for writers and scholars (Lee, 2005ab). The story of an online grassroots resistance movement is also fascinating in that it represented the revolt and resistance of the weak in cyberspace and a new way of playing, in which thousands of weak players could gather together for a common cause.

Since the early period of MMORPGs, the dominant culture of Korean online gaming has followed the laws of power, such as “law of the jungle,” under which strong clans rule and dominate the game worlds, gaining game items, gold, and even real money by gold farming. Clear examples are *The Kingdom of the Winds* (Nexon, 1996), *MU Online* (Webzen, 2001), and *Lineage I*. The participants in the Bartz Liberation War resisted this dominant culture and gained widespread support in doing so. Although they were not completely successful in making a lasting change, they contributed to a remarkable historical event in online gaming. In 2011, NC Soft even used the Bartz Liberation War to promote a new update to *Lineage II*.

The effects of the Bartz Liberation War were not limited to the boundaries of the Bartz server, or even the *Lineage II* world, but affected other games, the media, and even discussions of real world history and politics. Players on other servers and of other games paid attention to it and even joined in as members of the Long-Underwear Corps, participating in resisting the dominant culture of dictatorship of the strong. The story has continued to spread through the Internet, news media, books, and fan-produced digital contents, continuing to the present day. The events of the Bartz Liberation War are also often discussed in terms of their connection to real historical events, such as the French Revolution (Lee, 2005ab) and the democratization movement in South Korea.

1.3 Research Questions

The Bartz Liberation War was an unprecedented and important event in history of the virtual world. It was perhaps the first revolution in the online game world, and revealed its contradictions, in terms of economy, politics, and culture. The war started based on the social problems of power and dominance, monopoly, and a dominant culture of playing for power. Its participants changed in-game society and subverted the dominant gaming culture by playing not only for fun or interests but as a means of resistance. I will examine the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps with regard to their role in “playing for resistance” in MMORPGs. My research questions are as follows:

- 1) How does playing for resistance emerge and become dominant in gaming culture?
- 2) What are the impacts of playing for resistance in both the gaming and real worlds?

First, I examine South Korean gaming culture and the *Lineage II* world. The South Korean online game industry and market have developed rapidly since the late 1990s. At the same time, South Korean economics, politics, and culture have undergone a massive transformation. I hope to examine this background, in order to better understand South Korean gaming culture and the problems of power and domination in the MMORPG world.

Second, I examine how and why playing for resistance emerged in the case of the Bartz Liberation War. Using Stuart Hall’s concept of the “oppositional reading” of media, I demonstrate the process and meaning of resistance against dominant gaming culture. As an unprecedented and creative movement of resistance, I examine the Long-Underwear Corps through Salen and Zimmerman’s concept of “emergence.”

Finally, I examine how playing for resistance received widespread support from both gamers and non-players. Gramsci and Hall’s concept of “hegemony” will help in the

understanding of this phenomenon, which is not limited to the game world, but expands outward to encompass relationships between games and other media, and between games and the real world.

1.4 Literature Review

MMORPG, Game world and Real world

Video games create fictional worlds—these worlds are composed of computer graphics, sounds, texts, and so on (Juul, pp. 133-135). And, players experience the worlds by playing video games. Those fictional worlds are various and imaginative. Players fight against aliens in future space wars, conquer new continents, or explore dangerous dungeons and kill dragons by magic. In this respect, video games seem to provide players with fictional worlds that are separated from reality in terms of digital technology and unlimited imagination.

Furthermore, online games provide new game worlds for players. Beyond the interaction between players and computers, online games create worlds which make it possible to simultaneously interact with other players in the same virtual place. In particular, MMORPGs create huge worlds for masses of players. Castronova (2005b) calls MMORPGs “synthetic worlds” which mean “crafted places inside computers that are designed to accommodate large numbers of people” (p. 4). Synthetic worlds provide imaginary and fictional worlds made by game designers, but the members of the worlds are played by real humans. These worlds are produced as software, so people can easily enter into them for fun without special virtual reality hardware. So, people experience both a fictional world and real humanity and easily immigrate to those virtual worlds with “enthusiasm” (pp. 4-9).

Players create their characters to enter into the game world—called “avatars.” Avatar

means “a god’s representation” in Sanskrit, and it is mostly used to describe “a player’s graphical representation in online games” (Pearce, 2009, p. 21). Players can choose the avatars they want in terms of looks, gender, class, race, and so on. For example, many players choose characters of a different gender to their own (Yee, 2001). However, the relationship is more complex. Avatars are controlled by real humans and can be regarded as “a medium through which one’s soul, one’s deep inner persona, is expressed” (Pearce, 2009, pp. 22-23). So, an avatar is not just a disembodied person from the real player, but multiple bodies which are constructed by negotiation with the real player’s persona (Pearce, 2009; Taylor, 2006a). So, even though an avatar’s looks or behaviors are different from the real players’, an avatar is not just a puppet for players, but can be regarded as another self of players in the virtual worlds.

Avatars have their own characteristics in virtual society. Bartle (2004) classifies players into four categories: Achievers, Socializers, Explores, and Killers. Achievers “like doing things that achieve defined goals” in the game world and within game systems such as the in-game ranking system; Socializers like “interaction with other people” in the game world; Explorers like to increase their knowledge about the game world, and “their joy is in discovery”; and Killers “want to dominate others” by killing others, politicking, rumor-spreading, and so on (Bartle, 2004, pp. 130-151). These types are not determined by game systems, but by players’ own fun and goals. Player types influence their playing and their relationships with other players. As we shall see, the Long-Underwear Corps challenged this character type classification.

Players meet each other through their avatars in the online game world; therefore, human relationships are very important elements in MMORPGs. Taylor (2006a) indicates that becoming a player is a process of socialization (pp. 32-52). Originally, human relationships are structured by game designers. Interdependence is designed as a basic principle of playing multiplayer

games, so players see and learn the efficacy of cooperation from the beginning of the game. For example, players may learn that soloing is less efficient than party play in saving both time and effort for hunting mobs. For building cooperation between players, numerous social systems are designed in a game. From the beginning, players learn how to communicate with other players. As basic functions, players can chat with the others, express emotions, trade, or request help by using commands. Additionally, players get involved with in-game higher social networks for successful play. Group systems, such as raiding parties for hunting mobs or completing quests, or a guild system for making a community are structured by game designers to support playing and social life. Moreover, beyond the given game design, players construct human relationships which are similar to those in the real world. Jakobsson and Taylor (2003) show that many qualities for participating in communities or social networks are similar to the real ones. For example, they make the analogy to mafia life, in which responsibility, trust, and reputation are important qualities for the practice of socialization or participation in social networks, such as entering guilds or building relationships of cooperation or conflict between groups.

Furthermore, those human relationships become more complex and create a social environment which is similar to reality. Castronova (2005b) writes, “the physical environment is entirely crafted and can be anything we want it to be, but the human social environment that emerges within that physical environment is no different from any other human social environment” (p. 7). So, we can see social institutions and social phenomena which are similar to those in the real world—such as governance and politics, markets and economies, culture, and so on. Masses of people live in the virtual world, so politics is a necessity to mediate or regulate conflicts of interests between them (p. 205). The online game publisher’s coding authority can play the role of a government (or even tyrant). By the End User Licensing Agreement (EULA),

Code of Conduct (CoC), and in-game systems, the coding authority restricts the players' activities and punishes them (pp. 205-210). This is a privilege of the world builder, so "all folks (players) are equal before God (coding authority)" (Wark, 2007, p. 8). Furthermore, a group of players, such as a guild, can govern the world as a representative of players. However, Castronova is skeptical of this governance (pp.207-215) which he argues is ineffective. As a seller, the publisher's tyranny might lose them their customers. Player governments and leaders have no reward and no powers because they don't have any rights to tax, arrest, and sue. So, those institutions cannot govern the entire world. He argues that the political status of the MMORPG world is anarchy, and it is ruled only by the law of the jungle. In the economy, huge amounts of virtual goods and currencies are exchanged in the MMORPG worlds. People trade their virtual goods and game money by private trade, auction house, or marketplace in the MMORPG worlds. In fact, beyond the in-game trading, those virtual goods and currencies are traded via real money through the online shops in the real world, such as *itembay* (www.itembay.co.kr). It is called "gold farming" and "real money trading (RMT)" in the virtual world. According to Castronova (2005b), the annual volume of trade was approximately above one billion dollars in 2005 (p. 13).

As stated above, these social relationships and phenomena show that the MMORPG worlds are not only new and imaginative, but also deeply related to the real world. The MMORPG worlds even expand into the real world. Taylor (2006a) describes the expansion of online relationships and identities to offline in the Fan Faire of *Ever Quest* (1998, Sony Online Entertainment) (pp. 1-11). Players meet offline at events such as fan faires or guild meetings, but they bring their avatar's identities and blur the distinction between the game and the real world.

Moreover, Castronova (2007) has radical ideas about the relationship between the game

world and the real world. He argues that the online games will massively affect to the real world—not only in people’s everyday lives but also in society’s public policy. The online game industry and market have rapidly developed since the 1990s, and the number of gamers has increased explosively. More and more people live in the game worlds, and they feel that the game worlds are another real world for them. So, the game worlds massively affect the players’ everyday lives as well as societies. For example, economically, gold farming produces real money, and the scale of its economy is huge and globalized—players earn real money in the game worlds. Socially, the game worlds provide interaction with people anywhere and at any time through avatars. It means that the game worlds create political and cultural power which can affect the real world. He also asserts that the “fun” of the game attracts people more and more, and provides them with opportunities for another life containing happiness. Therefore, he argues that we can see an “exodus” from the real to the virtual game world, like European immigrants to America in the past.

Furthermore, he suggests that new game worlds can change the real world. More people will enjoy and live in virtual worlds, and they will compare our real world with virtual worlds. So, if online games share structures with the real world and provide new values for people, then these values can be applied to the real world. From the aspects of social, political, and economic structure, he tries to apply the characteristics of online games to the real world. Based on the “fun” of online games, the game world can provide good policies for these issues—employment, equality of opportunity and outcomes, social insurance and the welfare state, wages and corporate structure, economic growth, taxation, and inflation and monetary policy. These policies can be tested in game worlds and can be applied to real world policies, and people will have inspirations about a better society from playing online games. Gaming will make for a “fun

society” and will end the current politics of misery. In other words, game worlds can change our real world. This is really important, because, online games are not just a waste of time for fun, but have great potential for people and the real world. The game world is not separated from the real world, but is deeply connected, and it can even affect the real world with a macroscopic viewpoint of social change.

Also, McGonigal (2011) argues that playing games is not just an escape from reality, but also helps to overcome problems in the real world. In particular, in online games, players learn the fun and power of collaboration, and this collaboration can be applied to solving real-world problems such as starvation, energy depletion, political corruption, and so on. In other words, games have the potential to change the real world.

From the discussion of the game world, I want to argue that the MMORPG world is not completely separated from the real world, but has a deep relationship with the real world. I also argue that the game world shares a similar structure with the real world in social relationships, economics, politics, and culture, and has great possibilities to affect or to change our real world. However, I do not overestimate the nature of the game world as a utopia like Castronova’s optimistic arguments. There are many social, political, and economic problems in the game world. For example, the Bartz Liberation War shows the political, economic, and cultural problems of the game world—even the dictatorship was for fun and economic interests.

Emergence

The activities of the Long-Underwear Corps are unprecedented and remarkable in the Bartz Liberation War and MMORPGs. They showed new ways of playing MMORPG—resistance against a dictatorship in the game world, the human wave attack and barricade

defense, and so on. I examine their play in terms of the concept of “emergence” by Salen and Zimmerman (2004) to understand the novelty and creativity of playing.

Video games are not only fictional, but also are real because real rules interact with players (Juul, 2005, pp. 1-6). Rules provide the structure of games and players negotiate with rules and learn to challenge them to gain outcomes. So, games show fictional appearances, but they are structured by real rules. For example, video games construct fictional fantasy worlds and battles with dragons in RPGs (Role playing game), but, rules make the results of battles—damage, winning, or losing—to be real events. In other words, rules, which are built by the game designer and shared by all players, provide challenges and limitations to players’ activities (Juul, 2005, p.5; Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, pp. 122-124).

However, players often show varied and creative patterns of play in spite of the limitation of rules. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) define this phenomenon as “emergence” (pp. 151-168)—“systems generating complex and unpredictable patterns of behavior from simple rules” (p. 158). When parts of a system interrelate and affect each other, then “complexity” arises among them. Complexity does not mean chaos or fixed/periodic status, but means complex interrelationships of parts within the system. Salen and Zimmerman exemplify the concept of complexity by the *Heads or Tails* game (pp. 156-158). *Heads or Tails* is a simple game. Just flip a penny and choose the correct side of the penny. So, it does not become complex. However, we can add some rules and make it complex. For example, we can add ten minutes of discussion time before guessing the side. We can also add a rule of winning points in a multiple numbers of games. In these variants, only adding simple rules and interrelationships among them produce unpredictable and unlimited numbers of patterns in the games. In other words, from the complexity, emergence arises.

Salen and Zimmerman consider “games as Emergent Systems—as a system, a game is a set of parts that interrelate to form a whole” (p. 152). Games are structured by rules, and various patterns of play and outcomes emerge from the set of rules. For example, *Pong*, a virtual table tennis, has simple rules, but unpredictable patterns of play and outcomes arise from them (p. 159). Players are also important elements in emergence in games. Players’ decisions interact with the game system, and produce emergence. For instance, in poker, players’ decisions make emergent patterns of play and outcomes (p. 164).

The concept of emergence is useful to explain unprecedented and creative patterns of play in online games, in particular MMORPGs. Moreover, in MMORPGs, the interactions between huge numbers of players produce more unique and unprecedented patterns of play and more complex situations in the virtual world. Pearce (2009) shows unique and various emergence cultures in MMORPG worlds—for instance, a huge virtual world economy, gold farming, and so on (pp. 39-42). These phenomena are not originally intended by the game designers, but players create those unprecedented and creative plays of emergence in MMORPG worlds.

Oppositional Reading, Hegemony, and Playing for Resistance

Stuart Hall’s “Encoding/Decoding” (1980) gives significant insights into understanding media consumption. He criticized the traditional linear model of media circulation—sender/message/receiver—and understood that media is a more complex and articulated process of four stages—production, circulation, consumption, and reproduction. In particular, he emphasized the processes of “encoding” and “decoding” as “determinate” moments of producing meanings. The meaning of the media message is not entirely determined by the sender’s

intention, but rather is socially produced in the moment of encoding and decoding as a form of discourse. Thus, in the process of production, the meaning of the media message is produced in the structure of media institution and contains its socio-cultural context. In the process of consumption, the meanings are produced by the decoding of the audiences within their socio-cultural context. In other words, the audience is not a passive receiver, but actively interprets media messages. However, this does not mean that the consumption is entirely free from other processes and society's dominant cultural order. For example, as Procter (2004) indicated, broadcasting coverage of 9/11 broadcasting was encoded by the conventional discourse on a negative view of Islam in western journalism, but the responses were diverse because the audiences actively interpreted it according to their own socio-cultural contexts, such as religion, ethnicity, and so on (pp. 63-71).

Hall classifies media consumption into three ways of decoding. The first is "dominant-hegemonic reading." Hall uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which means "the process of establishing dominance within a culture, not by brute force but by voluntary consent, by leadership rather than rule" (Procter, 2004, p. 26). Dominant-hegemonic reading means that the audience decodes the message in terms of the encoding process or by the dominant cultural order. Within the hegemonic viewpoints, the dominant order is "natural," "inevitable," "taken for granted." Second, "negotiated reading" means that the audience decodes the message by adopting and opposing the dominant reading. It is a contradictory reading of the media, and "it accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reversing the rights to make a more negotiated application to 'local conditions', to its own more corporate positions" (Hall, 1980, p.137). Third, "oppositional reading" means that the audience decodes the message by recognizing the dominant code and opposing it. From the oppositional reading, "the struggle

in discourse” occurs (Davis, 2004, pp. 60-67; Hall, 1980, pp. 134-138; Procter, 2004, pp. 64-71).

Hall’s essay on encoding/decoding focuses on the analysis of television news. However, I use Hall’s concepts to examine MMORPG and playing for resistance in the Bartz Liberation War. While the relationship between media producer and consumer is much more complex in the world of games, it still produces hegemonic gaming codes. Moreover, as seen in Castronova (2007) or McGonigal (2011), online game studies seem to consider the characteristics of games too positively and optimistically. However, they do not pay attention to the problems of power and domination among players in the game world. In this respect, Hall’s idea is still relevant and needs to be modified in the field of game studies.

Salen and Zimmerman (2004) argue that “games create their own time and space separate from ordinary life” (p. 94). This artificial time and space of games is circumscribed by a specific frame, the “magic circle,” which is borrowed from Huizinga (1955). Within the magic circle, a new reality for playing is created by the rules and by players’ activities. The world of the game within the magic circle is not only closed off by rules, but is also opened by cultural systems. In other words, while game worlds are structured by rules, a player’s action is not only determined by the rules, but is also created by exchanges of meaning within the game world and with cultures outside of the magic circle (Salen and Zimmerman, pp. 94-97). Therefore, MMORPGs are magic circles which create their own world by setting out rules and meaning exchanges among players and cultures.

However, in a capitalist society, video games are not just for children’s play, but are products of a highly developed cultural industry and market. MMORPGs are cultural products created by game designers and developers, and the rules of these games are produced by game companies. Therefore, while game worlds seem to be new and fictional places populated with

digital images and sounds, they are actually structured magic circles that are controlled by game designers, developers, or publishing companies. Those magic circles contain the socio-cultural context of the game companies as producers.

Like other media products, games are produced for popularity and profit by following popular trends or cultures. For example, the game worlds of *Lineage II* and *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard Entertainment, 2004) are different in their basic structure—e.g., their avatar system, battle and player killing (PK) systems, clan or guild system, quests and goals, in-game economy, and so on—in terms of different culture and market conditions. In particular, *Lineage II* emphasizes a massive PvP (Player versus Player) system due to the dominant market trend and popularity of PvP contents in South Korea. Those dominant codes of game systems and rules are justified and naturalized by providing fun and by the new and fictional world settings. Therefore, I argue that Hall's concept of encoding in media production can be applied to game development.

Within the magic circles, players follow the rules for enjoying games. As Juul (2005) says, rules provide challenges for players, and players enjoy fun by overcoming those challenges. Players should understand how rules work and how they are structured within the game system to capitalize on their fun. Meanwhile, the dominant codes of the games and their rules, which are produced within the socio-cultural contexts of game producers, are naturally absorbed into the player's activities. For example, the game systems of *Lineage II* emphasize PvP contents, and players should understand the dominant code of rules of PvP and enjoy PvP in they hope to play *Lineage II*. Those show the relationship between the dominant code of the game and game play. This is similar to Hall's concept of the dominant reading of media.

However, it is important to recognize that game players are different from traditional

mass media audiences. Playing games is more active than reading newspapers or watching television or movies. Players experience the fictional game world directly—they live in the game world, and even change the game world. But, following Hall, I argue that playing games can be considered as decoding in the media consumption process. Hall considered that the audience is also a “producer” who generates meanings in decoding (Proctor, 2004, p. 66). As producers, players actively interpret the given game world within their socio-cultural context, both in the game world and in real world simultaneously, and generate meanings through their play.

In particular, in online games such as MMORPGs, the interactions among the consumers (players) are as important as the relationship between the media producer and the consumer. As more active producers and players construct a dominant gaming culture in the game by their socialized playing—for example, the cultures of party, PK, gold farming, and so on, those cultures contribute to the construction of MMORPG worlds. For the most part, the dominant gaming culture follows the dominant game code—for example, the dominant culture of preference for PvP in *Lineage II* players. However, the gaming culture is constructed not by producers but by *players*, so it can be considered to have relative autonomy from the dominant gaming code.

Furthermore, there are conflicts between the producers/dominant game codes and the players/gaming culture. Players can experience dissatisfaction with the dominant game codes and gaming culture. Also, players can realize the problems inherent in the dominant game codes and gaming culture, and ultimately change them. For example, players can consider regulating PvP through the agreement of players or the player governments. Alternatively, players can organize in-game protests about new patches and the ownership of avatars, such as in *World of Warcraft*

(Castronova, 2005a; Taylor, 2006b). So, MMORPG players doubly interpret two intersecting forms of hegemony—the dominant game codes and the gaming culture—in one game.

Therefore, developing Hall (1980), I suggest three ways of decoding game consumption. First, when players decode a game in terms of the encoded meaning of the game's designer or the dominant game culture of the players, it can be considered a “dominant-hegemonic reading” of the game. A “negotiated reading” means that players decode game worlds by adapting a mixture of the dominant reading and oppositional elements. However, when players begin to decode the game in opposition to the dominant-hegemonic reading, it may change the dominant-hegemonic reading of the game and the game world itself—known as “oppositional reading” of the game—and playing for resistance and hegemony struggles begin within the game culture.

Those concepts of reading games are useful for understanding the resistant playing activities in the game. Game worlds are not just a blank slate, but are culturally structured magic circles created by game companies. However, players can change game worlds by resisting the given rules and codes. The Bartz Liberation War is the best example of this, because players changed their understanding of the game world (NC Soft) and gaming culture (DK), and went on to resist them. That change and resistance was not determined from the beginning, but occurred during critical moments of their game play. Even though the games are more interactive systems than traditional media, Hall's concepts are useful for examining those critical moments. Therefore, by developing Hall's concepts of media reading, this thesis examines how players change their understanding of the game world and the gaming culture, and how they resist the game world and gaming culture, within the socio-cultural context of South Korean gaming, as they did in the Bartz Liberation War.

1.5 Research Method

This project uses textual analysis and archive research for discourse analysis as the main research methods. MMORPGs are cultural products constructed by game companies and players. In examining MMORPGs as products of game companies and the game industry in general, close textual analysis is helpful to understand the meanings of game systems and the dominant codes of games. Furthermore, MMORPGs are the cultural products of players' social play activities. Archive research for discourse analysis can help understand how players construct their game worlds and the dominant gaming culture.

First, this project is a case study of a specific MMORPG, so I use close textual analysis of *Lineage II*. I analyze the *Lineage II* world and its game system, such as its worldview, character creation, classes, combat systems, levels and items, clans, and social hierarchy. Video games are different from other media such as films, televisions, and newspapers. However, game systems and in-game materials are not just products of computer programming: they have underlying meanings and produce meanings in the forms of images, sounds, texts, or figures. Therefore, I consider *Lineage II* as a media text, and I analyze it from its game systems and rules to the connotation of meanings. Then I examine how the *Lineage II* world and its dominant game codes are designed and constructed by NC Soft. Before I conduct a textual analysis of *Lineage II*, I also examine the history of Korean MMORPGs and their socio-cultural and economic contexts to understand why *Lineage II* is a socially constructed media text.

Second, this project uses archive research for discourse analysis of the dominant gaming culture and the resistance against it. MMORPGs are produced by game designers and companies, but game worlds and societies are constructed by players. Players can follow the dominant code of games and gaming culture, but they can also resist them, as they did in the Bartz Liberation

War. Therefore, I use archive research for discourse analysis to understand how the players in Bartz resisted the dominant game code and gaming culture. Archive research is commonly used in historical research, so I consider it useful in examining the historical changes in the Bartz Liberation War. To conduct archive research, I examined bulletin boards of *Lineage II* player's online communities, blogs, and other online communities' free boards. From the historical records of the Bartz Liberation War, I reconstituted the historical changes in the dominant gaming culture by discourse analysis. In Korean gaming culture, bulletin boards are important spaces to interact with other players. Players usually develop their own Internet communities to share their knowledge, experiences, and even their private affairs. Hundreds of posts and replies appear daily on the online community boards of popular games. Much like diaries or historical records, private gaming experiences are shared by players with others. Therefore, bulletin boards are archives of historical materials with which I examine the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps. I collected materials from PlayForum (www.playforum.net)'s *Lineage II* freeboard as a main archive; PlayForum was the most famous community Web site for *Lineage II* players in the mid-2000s. Its *Lineage II* freeboard has approximately 600,000 posts since the close beta service of *Lineage II* in 2003. I collected important posts written on the first Bartz Liberation War from the *Lineage II* freeboard. First, I collected famous posts that are often quoted in the materials about the Bartz Liberation War. Second, I collected posts that were written during the important historical events in the Bartz Liberation War, for example, the posts about the Long-Underwear Corps when they first emerged. Third, I collected posts that are controversial, such as posts that provoked a high number of replies. Among them, I directly quote some of the most important posts in this thesis. I likewise obtained materials from other online game communities' bulletin boards, blogs, and news articles to examine the impacts of the

Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps in other games or outside the field of games. However, it was difficult to collect the direct voices of DK members. Firstly, DK and its allied clans had their own homepages, so they mostly communicated with each other in their exclusive online communities. Unfortunately, most of them have disappeared. Also, PlayForum's bulletin boards were occupied by anti-DK players during the war and DK was severely blamed. Therefore, DK members often hid their clan identity in the posts or did not write posts on PlayForum. Also, DK regulated the posting on the open bulletin boards due to preventing negative controversies which harmed their fighting spirits. All posts and materials were originally in Korean, so I translated them. I deleted profane language and other unnecessary parts of the posts, but I tried to make direct English translations to preserve as much as possible the original meanings of the posts.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 is an introduction of this thesis. First, this chapter shows the overview and research questions of this thesis. Second, this chapter describes the history of the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps as background knowledge. Third, this chapter includes literature review and research methods. In the literature review, I examine three themes: MMORPG, the game world and the real world; Salen and Zimmerman's concept of "emergence"; and Hall's concept of "oppositional reading" of media. In the section on research methods, I suggest two main methods—a textual analysis of *Lineage II* and archive research on bulletin boards.

Chapter 2 deals with two main themes: First, the development of South Korean gaming culture; second, an analysis of *Lineage II* world. This chapter is about the making of a dominant

culture of gaming in South Korea. The first part is about the development of the South Korean online gaming culture. South Korea showed a rapid and unique development of its online game industry and culture since the late 1990s, which were represented by the boom of *Starcraft* and *Lineage I*. Following on from Jin (2010), I look through the socio-cultural factors and implications of the development of Korean online games. He argues that governmental policies, a competitive market, the development of ICT, and people's preference for new online technology are political and economic factors in the development of the online game industry in Korea. He also shows the socio-cultural factors of development of broadband and online games, such as the rise of PC bang, a mass play culture, and quick culture and so on. I also describe a short history of MMORPG in South Korea, which is the one of the most popular genres, following Donovan (2010), Lee (2005ab), and so on.

The second part is about an analysis of the *Lineage II* world. *Lineage II* was the most popular Korean MMORPG in the mid-2000s. It contained the major characteristics of formerly popular MMOPRGs. So, I analyzed the *Lineage II* world as an important game text to understand the dominant gaming culture. The game system and its meanings help to understand it—hunting and battles, items, clans, PK (Player Killing), power and levels, taxes and castle siege, gold farming, bulletin boards, and so on. Many critics of gaming culture argue that the conflict between players is an important factor of success of games in Korea, which is supported by the game systems. Within those systems, players developed the dominant cultures of “the Law of the Jungle”, and “Power Worship”.

Chapter 3 covers the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps chronologically. This chapter is about oppositional reading of the game and gaming culture—how players read the game world opposing the dominant culture, and how they resisted against

the dominant culture. I examine it with three main themes: the dominant and negotiated reading of the game, and the creation of playing for resistance, and the emergence of the Long-Underwear Corps.

Firstly, this chapter examines the dominant and negotiated reading of the game. The best example of dominant gaming culture is the dictatorship of DK. They were the most powerful players, and ruled the world and other players, monopolized game money and items for dominance and gold farming. They even massacred other players to maintain power and for fun. However, within the dominant culture, general players did not resist it but accepted their rule. I explain this phenomenon as dominant and negotiated readings of game and gaming culture.

Secodly, this chapter examines the creation of playing for resistance in the Bartz Liberation War. As was seen in Chapter 3, most players in Bartz were repressed under the DK dictatorship. Although, some players resisted against DK, most of players were indifferent to them and they failed. However, DK declared two policies and players were angry with them—a tax increase and the control of “Lair of Antharas.” Many players began to realize that most victims of the DK dictatorship are general players, and rejected the dominant gaming culture and the Law of the Jungle—oppositional reading of the game. Players compared the DK dictatorship with a real world dictatorship or colonial rule in history. In contrast, the anti-DK movement was regarded as “people in real history” who resisted injustice. Many players also understood the game world differently. The game world should not be in chaos or dictatorship, but in freedom and justice. Their avatars were not just puppets for fun, but another “themselves” in the new world. From the oppositional reading of game, playing for resistance arose.

The third part examines the emergent play of the Long-Underwear Corps. During the Bartz Liberation War, an unprecedented and revolutionary group, the Long-Underwear Corps

appeared to resist the DK dictatorship. They were a massively numerous group of newly created low level characters, and used creative tactics by using massive numbers, such as human wave attacks with effective skills, human shields, and so on. Within the rules of battle in the game, the Long-Underwear Corps found unprecedented and creative patterns of emergence to fight against strong characters. Their play subverted the dominant gaming culture—the weak beat the strong by numbers and emergent tactics. Many players participated in the Long-Underwear Corps for justice, fun, and even for interest, and they were regarded as a symbol of grassroots power in the *Lineage II* world. Interestingly, the Bartz Liberation Army and Long-Underwear Corps became the common interests of all *Lineage II* players. Numerous posts on the bulletin boards reported the terrible situation of the Bartz server, and they appealed to participate in the Long-Underwear Corps. At first, players on other servers were indifferent about them, but they realized that the dictatorship was a serious problem of the entire *Lineage II* worlds. Even players on other servers participated in the Long-Underwear Corps to resist the DK dictatorship. With the support and participation of general players of *Lineage II*, the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps established their legitimacy of resistance. Eventually, with the support of the Long-Underwear Corps, the Bartz Liberation Army won the war.

Chapter 4 is about the negotiation of hegemony of playing for resistance in the dominant gaming code and gaming culture, and in the real world culture and politics. The first part deals with the hegemony of the anti-DK forces and the Long-Underwear Corps within the game and gaming culture. After the war, the Long-Underwear Corps organized on any server which had suffered a dictatorship like Bartz—their community for resistance transcended the boundaries of clan and server. Their resistance expanded to the other games, and influenced to the dominant game codes and gaming culture in South Korea. Eventually, in 2011, NC Soft approved the Bartz

Liberation War as official history of *Lineage II*, and distributed official posters about the battle of the DK and the Long-Underwear Corps for promotion of a new update of *Lineage II*.

The story of the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps was distributed through the internet bulletin boards, news media, fun products, books, and so on. Many people who did not play *Lineage II* paid attention to the story, and even supported them by participating in the war. The story is still circulating, and it is remembered as the first revolution from the bottom in the virtual worlds. Moreover, the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps often appear in online discussions about real politics as an example of a grassroots movement. In 2008, there were massive protests against governmental policies in South Korea. Many people were reminded of their experience of the Long-Underwear Corps, and compared it with the political situation in the real world. It was an experience of brutal war and violence in the game world, but also, it was a cultural experience of resistance in the real world—cultural struggle for hegemony.

2. SOUTH KOREAN ONLINE GAMING CULTURE AND *LINEAGE II*

2.1 Development of South Korean Online Game and Culture

South Korea has accomplished a great deal in developing the online game industry and gaming culture since the late 1990s. Economically, the Korean video game industry has shown drastic growth—the total scale of the game market increased from 835 billion in 2000 to 7,431 billion Korean Won in 2010. The online gaming sector has shown unique and rapid growth and has become the most important sector in the Korean game industry. The market share of online games has grown from 22.9 percent in 2000 to 64.2 percent in 2010 (Korea Creative Contents Agency, 2001-2011). World-famous Korean online game companies—such as NC Soft, Nexon, NHN, etc.—lead the domestic as well as global online game market. In 2010, Korea's share of the global online game market was 25.9 percent, or about 4,123 million US dollars (Korea Creative Contents Agency, 2011). Moreover, the Korean gaming culture has attracted the attention of global gamers and established new ways of enjoying games, such as e-sports and PC bangs (Korean internet cafes for gaming). In 2010, 58.6 percent of Korean people were playing video games, and 67.1 percent of gamers were playing online games (Korea Creative Contents Agency, 2011). Korean gamers are often regarded as the most enthusiastic gamers in the world, in particular, in *StarCraft* or MMORPGs.

The development of Korean online games and gaming culture reflects remarkable changes in Korean society. Before the late 1990s, video games were viewed as a negative or even evil means of leisure. For example, most schools and parents prohibited their students and children from going to video arcades. For them, video games were childish and harmful for children's studies and well-being. However, as Ryu (2008, September 1) noted, after the late 1990s, online games became an important part of the economy and a social phenomenon that

changed the daily life of Korean people. Therefore, it is important to understand how and why Korean online games have developed and succeeded.

According to Jin (2010), the development of Korean online games is explained by economic and cultural factors. Regarding economic factors, he suggested that governmental policy, a competitive market, and the rapid development of information and communication technology (ICT) established the foundations of broadband services and the online game industry (pp. 19–56). The Korean government established the policy on the distribution of broadband services in 1995 and supported the ICT industry and encouraged market competitions. As a result, 80 percent of households used broadband services by 2005. These governmental policies and ICT companies successfully established the infrastructure of the ICT industry, becoming one of the most important factors in the development of Korean online games. The government also supported the online game industry by providing educational institutions or financial subsidies. And, ironically, the economic crisis of 1997 provided the online game industry with an opportunity to develop (Jin, 2010). During the crisis, many workers who worked for large ICT companies lost their jobs, and they established small but creative businesses of ICT or online games (Rohwer, 2000). Also, many of laid-off workers started a new business called “PC bangs,” Korean internet cafes for gaming. People were immersed in playing games to escape from a gloomy social atmosphere. After the great success of *StarCraft*, PC bangs entered their golden era (Jin, 2010; Huhh, 2009). The number of PC bangs rapidly increased from about 100 in 1997 to 22,548 in 2001 (Korea Creative Contents Agency, 2002).

Moreover, Jin (2010) explained that historical factors affected the industry. Due to the tragic history of Japanese colonial rule in the early twentieth century, the Korean government prohibited the import of Japanese cultural products, such as televisions, movies, songs, and so

on. Video games were also prohibited until 1998, so people could not experience the Japanese console games that dominated the world game market, such as Sony's PlayStation, Sega's Dreamcast, or Nintendo's N64. This protective policy secured the video game market from the domination of foreign companies and provided opportunities for the domestic industry.

Widespread illegal copy markets deeply affected the gaming industry. Before the 2000s, Korean society was unfamiliar with the importance of copyrights of cultural products, so it was easy to find piracy markets. Therefore, the gaming industry concentrated on the online game market, which was considered safe from the piracy problems.⁹ From the establishment of broadband infrastructure to the market status, these economic factors contributed to the development of Korean online games.

It is also important to examine the cultural factors of the development of Korean online games. Jin (2010) suggested that the ready acceptance of new ICT technology was caused by the cultural characteristics of a "demand for quick change," an "enthusiasm for edutainment," a "me-too culture," and a "mass-play culture" (pp. 26–32). Those characteristics contributed to the rapid distribution of broadband services and the popularity of online games. The Korean people had been overcoming their poverty through the rapid social and economic changes since the 1960s, so a desire for quickness became an important characteristic of the culture. This became one of the important factors for the rapid distribution of ICT technology. Also, enthusiasm for edutainment (education with entertainment) played an important role in the distribution of ICT technology. In particular, most parents regarded the Internet as a necessary tool for their children's education and future job, so they bought PCs and connected to broadband services without hesitation. Jin also asserted that Korea's collective culture affected the distribution of

⁹ In contrast US or other countries, Korean online game publishers do not sell game packages but only distribute their products by online distribution. This policy makes secure their products from the piracy problems.

ICT technology and online games. The Korean “me-too culture” means that Korean people strongly follow the trends in society. For example, if a Korean began to use the latest broadband service, most his or her neighbors would want to use the same service to be a part of the group-oriented society. Mass-play culture, which is deeply related to the me-too culture, played an important role in the popularity of online games. In essence, Korean people prefer doing something together to doing something alone; this is true of gaming as well. In addition to Jin’s examination, it has been shown that a lack of leisure culture contributed to the boom of online games. Pundits and scholars have criticized the lack of leisure, in particular for children and students (Cho, 2007). The enthusiasm for education is great in Korea, so most of a student’s life is concentrated on study. For example, 57.9 percent of students spent their after-school time on private education in 2006 (Cho, 2007). They have little time for leisurely pursuits such as sports or outdoor activities. For them, computers with broadband services are one of the few means for available leisure at home or at a PC bang, so 44.6 percent of students use a PC for online gaming.

As shown above, these economic and cultural factors contributed to the rapid distribution of broadband services and the development of online games. However, to obtain a deeper understanding of Korean online games and gaming culture, it is important to pay attention to the “PC bangs” as a symbol of Korean online gaming culture. In the Korean language, “bang” means room—so, a PC bang means a room for using a PC. Like the Internet cafes in other countries, PC bangs equip dozens of PCs with a broadband connection, and people pay to use these PCs. However, a PC bang is different from an Internet cafe—a PC bang is a localized and specialized space specifically for online gaming (Huhh, 2009).¹⁰ PC bangs appeared within the socio-cultural and economic context of Korean society around the late 1990s, so they contained those elements of Korean society and culture. PC bangs rapidly proliferated after the economic crisis not only

¹⁰ In Korea, a PC bang is often called a “game bang.”

for their economic purposes but also as they grew in cultural favor. At first, people thought that PC bangs showed the newest and most advanced technology for leisure, and it corresponded with the people's demand for quick change—it was a differentiated space for leisure from the old spaces, such as billiard rooms or video arcades. People could play the newest generation of computer games by paying per hour without any inconveniences of buying a PC or game package individually. Additionally, the group-oriented Korean culture played a pivotal role in the huge popularity of PC bangs. PC bangs provided a new space for mass game playing via broadband services. Playing online games with groups of friends at the PC bangs transformed into one of the most popular leisure activities of young Koreans. People easily played online games with others not only in the network but also those physically with them. For example, the great success of *StarCraft* arose from these characteristics: People could play *StarCraft* not only with players in the global network of Battle.net, but also with their friends together at PC bangs. Therefore, Huhh (2009) argued that PC bangs' cultural roots actually come from the pre-Internet society's leisure trends, such as the video arcade (pp. 107–109). People created and enjoyed human relationships in the virtual space and in real life simultaneously through online gaming at PC bangs. Because of this, many Koreans who have broadband services at home still go to PC bangs to play games with their friends. Therefore, PC bangs created a unique and brand new gaming culture of mass play. Even world-famous Korean e-sports began with the gaming culture of PC bangs—tournaments of *StarCraft* between local PC bangs' star players developed into what we now know as e-sports (Huhh, pp. 108–199). Furthermore, the group-oriented gaming culture precipitated the great popularity of MMORPGs, such as *Lineage I*.

2.2 The Rise of Korean MMORPGs

Since 2004, after the boom of real-time strategy games, in particular *StarCraft*, MMORPG became the most popular genre. In 2004, MMORPGs were top-ranked with 24.5 percent of gamer preference, and in 2010, MMORPGs were top-ranked with 32.3 percent of preference of Korean gamers (Korea Creative Agency, 2004-2010). MMORPG is a major genre for the Korean game industry since the boom of online games and has produced many globally famous games, such as *Maple Story*, *Mabinogi*, *Aion*, *Lineage I* and *II*, and so on.

The history of Korean MMORPGs began with multi-user dungeon (MUD) games—text-based online role-playing games—in the 1980s (Kim, H., 2005; Donovan, 2010, p. 310). University students began to enjoy MUDs by using the university's network, and some of them decided to further develop the games. In 1994, the first Korean MUDs, *The Land of Dangun* and *Jurassic Park*, were developed and published through an online bulletin board system (BBS) service. In the same year, Jae-kyung Song and Jung-ju Kim co-founded Nexon and successfully published *The Kingdom of the Winds* (*Baramenara*) in 1996, which was one of the first multi-user graphical (MUG) environment games in the world.¹¹ *The Kingdom of the Winds* created the world of ancient Korean mythology with computer graphics. Its historical background made people familiar with the game. From the beginning, Korean MMORPGs tried to differentiate themselves from foreign games by using national emotions and culture,¹² and their success showed the potential of the Korean game market and industry to compete with foreign games.

¹¹ *The Kingdom of the Winds* is currently on service by Nexon in 2012. It holds the record for the longest service time of an MMORPG in the world.

¹² Song said, "Nationalism was part of what I was taught since birth and throughout my education... So I think I had been compelled to make a game with a Korean theme. But after *The Kingdom of the Winds*, I was relieved of that kind of imperative. Because I am Korean, I think even if I make a medieval European fantasy game, Korean sentiments will naturally melt into it" (Donovan, 2009, p. 311).

The Kingdom of the Winds also proved that online games were safe from illegal copy problems, and it made a good profit in Korea (Donovan, 2009, p. 311).

Since the late 1990s, Korean MMORPGs have made great strides. The most famous and popular Korean MMORPG, *Lineage I*, opened the golden era. Jae-kyung Song moved to NC Soft and developed and published *Lineage I* in 1998. Different from *The Kingdom of the Winds*, *Lineage*'s background was a medieval European fantasy world based on the popular Korean cartoon of the same title. *Lineage I* showed more developed graphics and game systems. Its unique clan system of "blood pledge" and of unlimited item-equip and PvP systems attracted Korean players. In particular, *Lineage I* first introduced "castle siege," which maximized its PvP and clan systems for capturing castles for a clan's interest, attracted Korean players.¹³ After its great success, *Lineage I* established the Korean style of MMORPGs, and many Korean MMORPGs imitated it. In 2004, NC Soft released *Lineage II*, which introduced more developed 3D graphics, and Korean MMORPGs enjoyed a golden age.

Like the other developments in online gaming, the rise of Korean MMORPGs is heavily indebted to the group-oriented Korean culture. In western countries, Korean MMORPGs are criticized for lacking various kinds of quality content of enjoyment and narratives, such as quests and stories. Many Korean MMORPGs seem to have only the theme of hunting mobs and PK. Even their quests are mostly simple—go somewhere and kill mobs. It is still the most important problem of Korean MMORPGs, and many Korean MMORPGs have failed to attract western gamers because of this. However, Korean MMORPGs find their strong points from the sociality of online games. Korean players tend to seek social experiences, such as the bond of community, in online game playing (Lee, 2005b; Kim & Park, 2007; Whang, Hur, & Kim, 2005). Moreover, many players play online games to experience sociality rather than for the in-game entertainment

¹³ *Lineage*'s blood pledge and castle siege systems are explained in Chapter 2.3.

materials (Lee, 2005b). Lee (2005b) argues that Korean players strongly regard the virtual game world as an another world, so experiencing another social life is a more important aspect than the in-game entertainment (p. 45). Therefore, clans, guilds, or blood pledges are important elements for players. Rather than soloing or using instant party play for quests, players enjoy the game within their communities. Even many players who do not have anything to do in the game log on to meet and chat with other players in the community. Like one's nationality in real life, their communities are important identities of their avatar; players endure tiring hunting mobs and leveling up for the power of their avatars as well as of communities. Interestingly, these in-game communities often expand to the real world. A flourishing culture of community meeting in real life is the best example. *Gilmo* (guild meeting) or *hyuenmo* (meeting in the real) have become commonplace in Korea since the boom of online games. Players in the game community meet in the real world and enjoy a party at a pub and play the game together at a PC bang. Additionally, the game's forums or bulletin boards are an important space for players and communities. From the exchange of a player's private feelings or experience of playing to the declaration of war or alliance between communities, online forums and boards are another outside-game channel of communication for players. Without logging on to the game world, players can communicate with other players and watch the political situation of their game worlds. Therefore, Korean game companies pay attention to those characteristics and emphasize the in-game communities and society. More importantly, the developers and publishers effectively enhance the conflict between communities—for example, *Lineage*'s "castle siege" or "clan war" system. From those conflicts, communities require the loyalty of players, and players cooperate with other players and sacrifice for communities within the group-oriented culture. During the conflicts, players are immersed in the game and make their own stories for the victory of communities. Therefore, the

in-game entertainment is less important for them; as a result, MMORPG worlds in Korea are always full of political turmoil and war.

PC bangs have played an important role in the boom of MMORPGs and gaming culture (Huhh, 2009, pp. 109-112). NC Soft was able to easily advertise *Lineage* to gamers by offering free play at events at PC bangs. Publishers have also found new ways of making profits through PC bangs. Instead of charging an individual monthly payment, publishers charge fees based on the number of fixed IP address at each PC bang. This ensures stable profits for the companies, and is also beneficial to PC bangs and players. PC bangs do not need to buy game packages or accounts, and only need to buy fixed IP addresses, which allow them to earn money based on the difference between the IP fee and their customers' hourly payments. Meanwhile, players do not need to buy game packages or make monthly payments, and can just go to PC bangs and log on to play. It is convenient and economical to only pay by the hour with cash (Huhh, 2009, pp. 111-112).

PC bangs also provide an important gaming space for MMORPG players. Customers can easily play installed MMORPGs or watch other players play. The real world human relationships built in PC bangs often lead to the creation of MMORPG communities through the creation or joining of parties or clans made up of a PC bang's customers. Those clan members share the virtual game world as well as the real world at the PC bangs, allowing for a more complex and united relationship. PC bangs also allow for the development of communities by holding guild meetings and clan activities that require group unity and teamwork. In the case of *Lineage*'s castle siege, for example, thirty or forty clan members typically gather at one PC bang and fight for the castle together, as this provides advantages in terms of unity and teamwork (Huhh, 2009, pp. 109-110).

However, Korean MMORPGs and gaming culture have faced serious problems. First of all, competitions and conflicts have been criticized by players and game experts as having become too extreme. There are endless conflicts between players or clans, and many players are tired of them. To win or survive, players and clans must be stronger than others, so endless leveling up is often engaged in by hunting mobs, which is often called *nogada* in Korean, meaning unskilled construction work. Some strong clans dominate specific fields or dungeons to allow for more effective leveling up or item farming. Conflicts in the game world have also often expanded into the real world. The neologism *Hyunpi*,¹⁴ which means, roughly, “player killing in the real,” has become widespread among gamers and the Internet subculture, and real cases have been reported by media since the late 1990s.¹⁵ Second, the widespread practice of “gold farming” has also caused serious problems in both the gaming and real worlds. According to Huhh (2009, p. 110), Korean gold farming (*Hyunjil*) began when PC bangs offered promotions to new customers in 2000, in which they bought their expert players’ game items and gold and offered them for free to new customers as a method of promotion. Players also realized the profits that could be made through gold farming, which attracted many people into the MMORPG worlds. Strong clans found that the most effective way to engage in gold farming was through by domination of specific game fields and using automated bots, which allowed them to monopolize enjoyment of the game as well as real-world profits. This led to a worship of power among players, and increasingly brutal competitions and conflicts between clans. Also, many cases of *Hyunpi* (player killing in the real) were related to the gold farming. *Lineage I* was particularly criticized for encouraging the gold farming and domination of hunting fields, as NC Soft did not

¹⁴ *Hyun* is an abbreviation of *Hyunsil* (the real), and *pi* is an abbreviation of PK (player killing in the game).

¹⁵ The first case of media report occurred in 1999. One high school student killed and ridiculed one other player in *Lineage*. The victim, who was a gangster in the real, was too angry, so he assaulted the student with his gangster members and extorted the student's items (Lee, 1999, August 31).

strongly regulate them. Although *Lineage I* and other Korean MMORPGs enjoyed a golden age at this time, they also faced those serious problems. When *Lineage II* was released in 2003, many players admired its advanced graphics and systems, but those problems with the game eventually led to the Bartz Liberation War of 2004.

2.3 *Lineage II* and Dominant Gaming Culture¹⁶

After the great success of *Lineage I*, many Korean online game companies released MMORPGs and there was an intense competition in the market. Moreover, due to the technological development, the online game industry felt the need to introduce more advanced 3D graphics, sounds, and game systems in the new games. In this situation, *Lineage II* was developed and released by NC Soft in 2003, to succeed the great success of *Lineage I*. *Lineage II* made the best use of the new 3D graphics and advanced sounds. It followed the general game structure of *Lineage I*, but had more developed in-game, social and battle systems; In particular, the clan and castle siege was expanded. As a MMORPG blockbuster, *Lineage II* made a synthesis of the strong points of the previous Korean MMORPGs and new technologies. As a result, *Lineage II* fascinated Korean gamers and gained a great popularity since the beginning of open beta service. It recorded a number of occupations above 120,000 in August 2004, and it was regarded as the second national MMORPG, following *Lineage I* (Kwon, 2004, August 18). Therefore, *Lineage II* was not only new and innovative, but it was also deeply influenced by the dominant trend of the gaming industry as well as the dominant gaming culture at the time. In other words, *Lineage II* was born within the socio-cultural and economical context of Korean online games in the early 2000. A close analysis of the game's text is helpful to understand this important aspect of *Lineage II*.

¹⁶ For additional information of *Lineage II*'s game system, see Appendix A

Entering into the *Lineage II* world: Server, Avatar, Classes, and the World

Lineage II is a fantasy MMORPG. *Lineage I* and *II* are based on the popular Korean fantasy cartoon of the same title. But, as a prequel, *Lineage II*'s background is the 150 years earlier world of *Lineage I*. Therefore, the story and world of *Lineage II*, which is about the Aden Kingdom's conquest of the world, is mostly created by NC Soft. *Lineage II* describes a typical European fantasy world that is similar to other popular fantasy RPGs, and it is familiar to RPG gamers.¹⁷

To enter into the game world, players choose servers. Choosing a server is important, because each server acts as its own game world within *Lineage II*, and players must choose only one server. The servers are not interconnected, so players cannot move their characters to other servers, and must create new characters if they want to move servers.¹⁸ On October 2003, there were 25 servers in *Lineage II*, meaning that there were 25 different worlds within the game just before the Bartz Liberation War. Bartz was the first server, so it had the highest number of players. After choosing servers, players create their characters (avatars). Its character systems of race, class, and looks follow typical European fantasy's background. The five races are: Human, Elf, Dark Elf, Orc, and Dwarf.¹⁹ Each race has its own stats and special characteristics. For example, Elf moves fast but has low attack power, and Dwarf moves slow but has high HP. At first, there are only two classes: Fighter and Mystic. Fighter is specialized in the physical attack, and mystic is specialized in magical attack or healing. However, the avatars can choose more

¹⁷ On June 2012, NC Soft released a new MMORPG, *Blade and Soul*. Interestingly, it is not based on western fantasy but based on East Asian martial arts fantasy world, because many gamers are tired of mass produced western fantasy MMORPGs since the boom of *Lineage I*.

¹⁸ Today, NC Soft has begun to provide the ability to change servers, but at a price.

¹⁹ In 2007, new race "Kamael" was added with the new update of "The first throne-the Kamael."

evolved classes as they gain higher levels.²⁰ Players also choose their avatars' gender and looks which provide the identities of the avatars. Deciding an avatar's race and class is important because the avatar's identities, roles, and future outlooks are determined in that process.

After creating and choosing an avatar, players enter into one of the *Lineage II* world. All landscape, objects, mobs, and characters are represented with 3D graphics, and this was really shocking to players when *Lineage II* was released in 2003. However, its structure of the world follows typical European fantasy RPGs. The world consisted of 6 castles, 16 towns and villages, 15 dungeons, and 40 hunting fields in 2005. The castle is the most important place and represents the power and authority of the *Lineage II* world. Castles have their own towns or villages; for example, Giran castle owns Giran castle town. In the towns or villages, avatars are safe from the mobs or other hostile avatars, and they trade goods with NPCs (non-player character) or other avatars. Therefore, towns and villages are important places for the economy of *Lineage II* world. In contrast, the outside of the towns or villages are dangerous due to the mobs' or other avatars' attacks. It is like a "jungle". Dungeons and hunting fields are full of mobs, so avatars go there to hunt mobs in order to gain experience points and items. When avatars move to other towns or hunting fields, they must either take the risk of mob or other players' attacks, or pay an expensive fee to use the gatekeeper NPC's "teleport", allowing them to avoid the danger and save the time.²¹

²⁰ In 2004, there were 31 classes in *Lineage II*. However, players can choose their avatars class only within the given class path. For example, a human fighter of level 20 can choose the new class among human knight, warrior, and rogue.

²¹ Since the update of "Gracia" in 2008, below level 40 players use teleport for free.

Combat, Item, and Leveling

Combat is a basic and yet the most important activity in *Lineage II*. In particular, hunting mobs is the routine of the day in the *Lineage II* world; it is comparable to real work. By hunting mobs, players develop their avatars and earn economic interests in the gaming world. However, except for combat, *Lineage II* has few things to do with NPCs for enjoying or developing the avatars. For example, although avatars gain those rewards by completing NPC's quests, the quests are mostly designed for secondary activities for hunting mobs; most of these quests are about hunting mobs and do not adequately express the narrative of the *Lineage II* world. Therefore, hunting mobs is the only and most effective way of developing the avatars.

Avatars hunt mobs in the hunting fields or dungeons. When a player clicks the mouse on a target mob, combat begins. Using skills allows a player to more easily win a battle. The result of combat is determined by the avatar and mob's quantified stats—health points (HP), mana points (MP), physical/mana attack/defense power, accuracy, speed, and so on. Players' weapons and armor increase their avatar's stats. All stats are calculated to determine HP damage. When a mob's HP becomes 0, the player wins the battle, and avatars gain experience points (XP) that allow them to level up, skill points (SP) that help them learn new skills, Adena (in-game money), and items. If the avatar “dies” in the battle, he or she loses some XP points, but can be “revived” at a reviving point near a town or village. To engage in an effective battle, it is a highly-recommended strategy to join a party made up of other players. In the party, each avatar has its own role based on class. Fighters (knights, warriors, rouges, archers, wizards with mana attacks) cause damage to mobs on the front lines. Buffers (wizards, enchanters, summoners) provide buffs, which are spells that strengthen the other party members' avatars' stats and abilities in the

battle. Healers recover party members' HP. Through collaboration, a party can hunt mobs more easily and effectively.

Lineage II has a strong hierarchical rule of level. Higher level avatars have stronger stats and HP, and they are equipped with a better grade of weapons and armors.²² Also, each hunting field and dungeon is designed in terms of a specific level of avatars. For example, "Lair of Antharas" is adequate for approximately level 50-60. In the hunting fields for a higher level, players gain better rewards from strong mobs. Therefore, avatar's level shows the avatar's power and range of action. It means that an avatar's level represents his or her "social class" in the gaming world. The fruits of a higher level are sweet; therefore, it arouses Korean players' desire of the "me-too" culture. Many players want to be strong like other high level players and engage in the endless hunting. Therefore, as it is with *Lineage I* or other Korean MMORPGs, *Lineage II*'s combat and leveling system require players' *nogada*—the repetitive work of hunting mobs for leveling—to maintain this hierarchy.

Items are also important when playing *Lineage II*. Items, in particular armors and weapons, enhance the avatars' powers and their own looks, and represent the social class of an avatar by a symbolic differentiation—they reflect an avatar's authority (Lee, D., 2010, p. 262). As a result, new players who equip themselves with basic armors and weapons are often ignored by other stronger players; for example, a newly started player who equips themselves with a basic armor and weapon is ridiculed as wearing long-underwear (*Naebok*). *Lineage II*'s 3D graphics enhance this differentiation of looks well; it stimulates the players' competitions for leveling and good items. Therefore, as with other Korean MMORPGs, the tendency of the

²² It is different from *Lineage I*. *Lineage I* does not have level system, so only items show the power of avatars, and there is no limitation to equip them. However, in *Lineage II*, grades of weapons and armors are classified by level—No grade for level 0-20, grade D for 20-39, grade C for 40-51, grade B for 52-60, grade A for 61-75, grade S for above 75. If an avatar equips higher grade of armors or weapons, he or she will receive handicaps to stats and accuracy.

worship of power is prevailed. In other words, avatar's power—"level" and "item"—represents the social class or status of game world instead of old class antagonism (Wark, 2007, p. 11). High level players naturally dominate low level players. This order stimulates desires of players for being strong, superior, and for dominating others (Suria, 2008c).

However, it is not easy to hunt mobs for leveling or obtaining items. Firstly, due to the level system of *Lineage II*, players need to spend a huge amount of time hunting mobs. Players must repeat long and tiring mob hunts for leveling up, even though they lose XP when their avatars are killed by mobs or other players. Therefore, reaching the highest level is hot news for all *Lineage II* players.²³ Secondly, lack of hunting fields and mobs cause serious problems. Fifteen dungeons and forty hunting fields are too small for the massive number of players. As a result, there is severe competition for mobs, and this causes lots of conflicts between players; for example, conflicts over the right of priority for hunting mobs, killing other players for faster hunting, and so on. The conflicts between individual players often expand to the brutal war between clans or alliances, and the world of *Lineage II* is under the law of jungle by players. Therefore, *Lineage II*'s small number of hunting fields and leveling system effectively enhance the conflict of players and communities. Thirdly, the rewards of hunting are small, but the items are expensive. Players earn little XP and money by hunting, but spend lots of time and money in hunting. For example, for fast and effective hunting, players need to use items: "soulshot" for fighter or "spiritshot" for mystic. Those items provide a doubled attack or healing power, but the player consumes them for each attack or heal. Also, the prices of good armors or weapons are too high for casual gamers.

²³ It is different from western MMORPGS, such as *EverQuest*, *Dark Age of Camelot* (Mythic Entertainment, 2001), *World of Warcraft*, or *The Lord of the Rings Online* (Turbine, 2007). In those games, leveling is not as difficult or as important, so players more easily reach the highest level.

As a result, many players depend on gold farming and trading real money for in-game money and items. Gold farmers earn game money and items from hunting mobs, and sell them through virtual markets on the Internet, such as Itembay (itembay.co.kr), or through direct trade at PC bangs. Through gold farming, sellers earn real money, and customers easily buy items for hunting and leveling. Since *Lineage I*, gold farming has been familiar with Korean gamers, and *Lineage II* shows the same phenomenon of gold farming. Also, difficulties of leveling and lack of hunting fields causes the domination of good hunting fields by strong clans—those phenomenon were prevalent among previous *Lineage I* and other Korean MMORPGs. However, there is no in-game system that prevents gold farming or domination of hunting fields in the new game, *Lineage II*.²⁴

Clan (Blood Pledge)

Clan (or Blood Pledge)²⁵ is the most important social unit in *Lineage II*. Similar to other MMORPGs, *Lineage II* provides an in-game community system of clan. *Lineage II* does not have any pre-determined factions between players.²⁶ All other players can be friends, but again all of them can be enemies. In this situation, a clan provides faithful and reliable friends, the power of groups, and social experience to players. Mostly parties for hunting are created within a clan, and they provide safer and more effective hunting than soloing or instant parties. With the interaction with clan members, a player can enjoy the repeated hunting for leveling. Sometimes,

²⁴ *World of Warcraft* introduces a “bind on equip” system. Once players equip items, they cannot sell or give those items to the others. It reduces the necessity of gold farming.

²⁵ In Korean, a community in *Lineage* is called “*Hyulmaeng*,” and its meaning is close to “blood pledge” rather than “clan” in English. Jin (2010) used the term Blood Pledge in his book about Korean online game. However, clan is more widely used in global gaming culture, and the *Lineage*’s global server officially use clan. So, I use the term “clan” in most of this thesis.

²⁶ In contrast, *World of Warcraft*’s players are divided by two factions: the Horde and Alliance. Players can not attack same faction’s players without acceptance.

as an event, a clan can try the raid for hunting extremely strong boss mobs. Even their relationships expand to the real world, as clan meetings in the real world.

NC Soft realizes that the community is one of the most important elements for Korean gamers. In-game community stirs up the emotion of a group-oriented Korean culture, and it is a key for success in online games. Therefore, NC Soft designed *Lineage I* and *II* in such a way that they included a localized and specialized community system in the western fantasy of MMORPGs. Jin (2010) argues that *Lineage*'s group-oriented games and community systems show creative hybridization of global and local culture (p. 131). *Lineage I* and *II* not only use the English terms "guild" or "clan" directly, but they also use the Korean term *Hyulmaeng*, which means "blood pledge." *Hyulmaeng* emphasizes on the special bond of the community. Also, a clan has a complex hierarchy; a clan leader, who is called "*Gunju*" (*Gunju* means lord in English), is on the top of the hierarchy, and other members are ordered by the hierarchy of clan ranks which are decided by the leader—high rankers have more privileges and powers. Players pledge loyalty to the clan, and give a first priority to the clan's affairs in the game play. Through the efforts of clan members, the clan gains reputation points and levels up. As the clan level gets higher, the clan has much more things to do and this unlocks new clan abilities; for example, the clan increases the number of members (up to a maximum of 200), it registers the clan emblem, and it can declare a clan alliance or war, or a castle siege. The collaboration of clan members let them create their own stories, and conflicts between clans heighten the dramatic effects of those stories (Lee, 2005b). Therefore, a clan is important in constructing the identity of an avatar; it is similar with nationality in the real world. In the game screen, a clan's name and emblem are displayed at the top of avatars; in fact, in a higher position than the avatar's name. The characteristics of an avatar are often identified with his or her clan's. There is no place for

soloing players. players not in clans are often regarded as unsociable or having problems to join the clan. Anderson (2006) argues that a nation is a socially constructed “imagined community,” and states that it is “imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” without direct interactions among people (p. 7). Similar to the nations in the real world, players construct imagined communities of clans as nations in the game world.

PvP, Clan War, and Castle Siege

PvP (Player versus Player) is the most exciting activity in *Lineage II*. In contrast to western players, Korean players tend to prefer PvP to PvE (Player versus Environment) (Lee, 2005b). Therefore, *Lineage II* is designed to enhance the conflicts between players and strengthen the PvP system. In the basic PvP system, players can attack other players without the players' acceptance. However, in this case, the attacker's name color becomes purple. If the opponent counterattacks, then the opponent's name color also becomes purple, and PvP combat begins, with no PK (player killing) penalties between the players. When the purple avatar dies, he or she drops items with low possibilities. The purple status ends in few minutes, and both attackers and counter-attackers easily recover from it, but if a purple player kills another player with a neutral status and there is no counterattack, then PK is declared. The killer's name color becomes red and the avatar becomes a “chaotic” character. Anyone who attacks chaotic avatars does not receive any penalties. When chaotic avatars are killed, they drop their items as a penalty. Chaotic players need to engage in quests or join hunting mobs to change their color and chaotic status. Some players abuse this system to kill other players. They attack other players and induce a counterattack, and then enjoy killing the other players and taking the items that they

drop. This abusive kind of attack was adapted and developed by the Long-Underwear Corps in their human barricade tactics.²⁷

Lineage II includes massive amounts of PvP content. Large-scale clan battles are the real attraction of *Lineage II*. In a clan war or castle siege, hundreds of players fight in a battle simultaneously without PvP penalties. Not only do these massive battles provide magnificent spectacles, but they also stir the Korean players' group-oriented culture. Therefore, a clan plays a central role in PvP systems. A clan leader can declare a clan war against hostile or rival clans. Clan members are mobilized for the war, and they kill the enemies everywhere until the enemies surrender. Furthermore, a castle siege is the essence of PvP and clan activity in *Lineage II*. A clan leader can register castle siege until 24 hours before the siege time, then both the clan and alliance members of the attackers and defenders register to participate in the siege.²⁸ At the siege time, Sunday 4 PM or 8 PM, all the participants gather at the battlefield and fight each other. If the attacker succeed to enter into the castle and to occupy the Holy Artifact, the castle siege ends. For the victory of the castle siege, clans should use every endeavor with all members being involved. Ownership of castle shows the power of the clan; therefore, strong clans want to occupy it. Moreover, to enhance the competition between clans, castles are designed such that the owner gains significant amount of tax revenues from the trades between NPCs and the players in the castle's town. The rate is determined by the clan leader (it ranges from 0% to 15%). For the profits, the competition for the castles becomes more and more fierce and it brings about brutal clan war. Thus, the world of *Lineage II* is dominated by the "law of jungle" and "winner takes all," as NC Soft designed it from the first time.

²⁷ For more information, see Chapter 3-3.

²⁸ Not registered players can participate in the castle siege, but they have handicaps.

This chapter examines the development of Korean MMORPGs and the establishment of the online gaming culture. The socio-cultural and the economic context of Korea have deeply influenced the boom of the Korean online games. In particular, group-oriented culture has contributed to the massive popularity of MMORPGs since the invention of *Lineage I*. Through the emphasis on community and conflict between players, Korean MMORPGs enjoy their golden age. *Lineage II* was developed and published within those contexts of the online gaming culture, and it was designed to maximize the strong points of the Korean MMORPGs: *Lineage II*'s game systems correspond with the dominant trend of the industry and the gaming culture for the market's success. Therefore, the "law of jungle," "power worship," and "winner takes all" were inherent in the design of the gaming world with the developer's intention being to enhance the competition between players for fun. However, there were serious problems of severe competitions and gold farming. These problems were getting worse, and eventually the resistance against the dominant gaming culture, which is called "Bartz Liberation War," developed. This will be examined in the Chapter 3.

3. OPPOSITIONAL READING OF GAME AND PLAYING FOR RESISTANCE IN MMORPGS

The Bartz Liberation War in *Lineage II* was an unprecedented event in Korean online gaming history. Thousands of players resisted the domination of the few most powerful clans in the Bartz server. The players even organized a group of low-level avatars, the “Long-Underwear Corps,” for resistance to the power. It was not only a resistance to the strong in the game worlds, but also a resistance to the dominant gaming culture of “law of the jungle,” “power worship,” and “winner takes all”. Their playing for resistance to the dominant clans caught the attention of both gamers and media, and it is still remembered as a significant event in Korean online gaming. The present chapter examines the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps. From the beginning of the dominance of the leading clans to the victory of the resistance,²⁹ this chapter shows how playing for resistance emerged and became dominant in the Bartz server in *Lineage II* by drawing on and updating Stuart Hall (1980)’s concepts of “dominant, negotiated, and oppositional reading” of media.

3.1 Dominant and Negotiated Reading of Game: DK Dictatorship

At first, the Bartz Liberation War was caused by strong clans’ domination of the game world of the Bartz server. In particular, the Dragon Knights (DK) clan took the lead in dictatorship and monopoly in the game world by their strong power. In most stories about the war, DK is described as the worst villain in the game world. If they had only played the role of villains in the MMORPG, the resistance and war would be just another trivial story in the game world. However, their playing for dominance was related not only to the fun of players, but also to the dominant gaming culture and the characteristics of the game. Therefore, it is important to

²⁹ This chapter only deals with the first Bartz Liberation War.

examine the DK clan in terms of the gaming culture and game system to understand the situation of dominance in the Bartz server.

The history of DK clan began with *Lineage I*: DK was the strongest clan on the Depardieu server in *Lineage I*. DK owned all castles and dominated most of the good hunting fields for five years. On February 2003, *Lineage II*'s close beta service started, and DK decided to leave the world of *Lineage I*. DK massively immigrated to this new world of the Bartz server, because Bartz was the first server and had the largest population in *Lineage II*. All DK members selected Elves as their main race for the unity of clan. DK had had a well-organized teamwork and line of command since the time of *Lineage I*, so they easily expanded their influence over the Bartz server (Suria, 2008b).

However, a rival clan, Legend of Knight (LOK), challenged DK's power. The conflict between DK and LOK became severe. Eventually, a clan war—the first clan war in the history of *Lineage II*—broke out between DK and LOK over the domination of the hunting field, the Cruma Tower. In the early stage of war, LOK had superiority over DK, but LOK was defeated by DK's surprising attack. DK dominated the Cruma Tower, and suppressed the remnant of the defeated LOK's forces. DK won the war, and the closed beta service ended. LOK decided to move to the second server to avoid DK from the following open beta service. DK's monopoly and dictatorship had been foreseen from the closed beta service (Suria, 2008b). On July 2003, *Lineage II*'s open beta service started, and DK began to dominate most of the hunting fields. They were well aware of the way to be strongest by domination. DK appeared friendly strong clans by sharing the fruits of domination, and made alliances with the Genesis and Divine Knights clans—this was described as a DK-led “Three Clans United” (or DK United) (Sam

Hyulmaeng Yonhap) on March 2004. No clans or alliances could match them in power. From then, the DK dictatorship period began (Suria, 2008b).

As seen in their history, DK gained notoriety for power and domination since the *Lineage I* period. DK established the effective ways of monopoly and leveling by domination, and they did not hesitate to kill other players for the domination of the game world. Following Bartle (2004)'s classification of types of games, DK players' type can be classified as "killers" which mean "people who want to dominate others." Killers' activity is not limited to attacking or killing, but includes politicking and rumor-mongering (p. 130). DK desired to achieve absolute power in *Lineage I* and *II*, and dominated other players by all possible means, such as war, diplomacy, appealing to public sentiment in the bulletin boards, and so on. For example, according to the famous story in the Internet, DK used a vicious means to secure their domination. In *Lineage I* period, DK sent a spy to a rival clan to disturb the siege on a DK's castle. At the time of the castle siege, rival clan members and the spy gathered in a PC bang and prepared the siege, but the spy cut the line of the PC bang's hub and ran away.³⁰

Interestingly, DK acknowledged that they played an "evil" role in the MMORPG. Akirus, who was the most famous leader of DK in *Lineage II*, said that the DK clan chose to play evil characters.

Same with the real world, both good and evil exist in the *Lineage II* world. All people pursue good. However, Dragon Knights clan daringly pursues evil. Due to the existence of evil, good can shine more brightly. We never insist that we are good. We are confident to argue that we are evil. Also, I argue that we are the best war clan...

<Akirus. (2006, May 21). "Disbandment of Dragon Knights Clan" in *Lineage II*'s official freeboard of Bartz server.>

³⁰ See Appendix B

Brutal PK and domination were intended by the clan from the beginning. They enjoyed fun in the game by killing others, war, and domination of the game world. They did not care about other player's fun. However, they were far from typical villains or bad guys in Hollywood movies—rather, DK was similar to a military organization. DK had a rigid hierarchy and a strict chain of command. Members had to obey higher rankers—in particular, a clan leader had absolute power and authority. They used “*Dankyul* ^^7 (Unite ^^7)” as a salute in the clan chat.³¹ The members who disobeyed an order or quit the clan were brutally punished. All Korean men have to do military service for about two years, so this climate was familiar for male players.

Although DK showed a unique history and characteristics, such as role playing evil characters and a distinctive military climate, DK followed the dominant Korean gaming culture of MMORPGs. They understood the characteristics of *Lineage II* and the dominant gaming culture well, so they were able to use the most effective way of playing. Like other popular Korean MMORPGs, *Lineage II* emphasized the conflict between players and clans, so PK (Player Killing) was an important factor in content for enjoying.

Lineage II's combat system has not only hunting for leveling, but also PvP and clan war between clans or alliances. Ultimately, *Lineage II* has castle siege system. As long as the castle siege system exists, the war is inevitable...

<ShadowYeosol. (2004, February 21). In “The interview with a DK leader” in PlayForum's *Lineage II* hot news.>

Thus, DK's activities of killings were not a unique case in *Lineage II*. The result of PK or war would be decided by power—level, items, and size and quality of clan. Therefore, they found the effect way to leveling by the domination of hunting fields. The domination of hunting field was

³¹ ^^7 is an emoticon of salute.

that the strong clan's members occupied the fields and monopolized the mobs for hunting. The members enjoyed hunting and watched by rotations in the hunting field to secure the domination, like a workplace with day and night shifts in the real world. When other players entered into the hunting field without their permission, they were warned or killed. During the Bartz Liberation War, DK had a strict code of conduct in "Liar of Antharas":

The domination of Liar of Antharas provides a wonderful chance to enhance our power.

We expect that the domination of Liar of Antharas will provoke other players' resistances.

Controversies exist over the domination of hunting fields as a display of bad manner in game play, but it is beyond notice: In *Lineage II*, it is not a violation of game rules... 1.

All members should hunt mobs in Liar of Antharas..... 6. Remember, all non-allied characters in Liar of Antharas are our enemies. Kill them all.

<TVgamegwang. (2004, June 24). "DK's code of conduct in 'Liar of Antharas'" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* Freeboard.>

Also, the dominators could use automated bots, which enable their avatars' full-day operation without controlling, for leveling or gold farming. This was a violation of EULA (End-user license agreement), but was tacitly admitted by game companies and common in the Korean MMORPGs, so DK dominated the hunting fields by their organizational power from the beginning of *Lineage II*. In particular, they dominated the hunting fields for higher-level players (above Level 50), which allowed them to earn high EXPs and prevented the rival clans' growth. They followed the "law of jungle" and "winner takes all" rules well.

Bartz was the first and the biggest server, so the strongest DK was paid attention by all *Lineage II* players. By their domination of the game world, DK easily leveled up and became the

strongest clan in the all *Lineage II* world. Akirus, who was one of the leaders of DK, recorded twice the first reaching of the highest available game level: first of 70 and then, after a game update, the new available level 75. These news and an interview with him were reported by online media and online game web-magazines (Jung 2003; Kuk, 2004 April 9; Tei, 2004). In the dominant gaming culture, who was the strongest was an important matter for most players, so Akirus was praised and worshipped by many players— this comprises “worship of power.” However, the problems of DK’s methods of leveling and domination were often ignored by media and players. Except using automated-bots and gold farming, their activities of PK and domination were not in violation of rules. In conflict among players who are not breaking rules, NC Soft does not intervene. But, NC Soft did not actively intervene with the problem of automated bots and gold farming either, because gold farming was a contributory factor in increasing the number of players. Many players wanted to earn real money by gold farming, and their goals were to become leaders of strong clans that owned the castles or hunting fields for huge gold farming. Therefore, Akirus was regarded as the best model for them, regardless of the suspicion of using automated bots and gold farming. DK was regarded as a top leading group of *Lineage II* world, and Akirus was suggested as a desirable model of game player in the dominant gaming culture.

Furthermore, many non-DK players also took DK’s domination of the game world for granted by the code of game. They followed the dominant order of *Lineage II*. In particular, player killing was a “natural law,” which was allowed by the game designer and the rule of the game.

Many users who only hunt mobs don’t know any other way of playing in *Lineage II*. It’s Player Killing. In the real world, we must not kill other people due to a law. But there is

no such a law in the world of *Lineage II*. Certainly, the publisher has power, like a government does in the real world. But they do not intervene in the problems between players, but intervene in the problems with game systems only...

<Quickguerae (2004, March 16). “Resistance against DK in Bartz” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The developer and publisher, NC Soft, was “God,” and all players were “equal before God” (Wark, 2007, p. 8). Therefore, DK and other players were equal before NC Soft. NC Soft allowed player killing and did not intervene in it. Therefore, DK’s player killing could be justified by the natural law—the law of the jungle.

Some players appealed for resistance against DK, but they were ignored; many players even told them to be quiet. Soon, DK players came and killed them. Also, DK killed some other players. However, people blamed anti-DK players rather than DK’s tyranny. Bartz was really gloomy. Moreover, many people wanted to follow them to gain some advantage.

<Aragon. (2003, August 16). “Curuma Tower in Bartz server” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

DK’s domination by killing other players was not seen as wrong, because they were the strongest players in Bartz. Rather, their opponents were blamed, because they were weaker than DK. If they wanted to resist DK, they should be stronger than DK. Already, LOK’s defeat showed the lesson of the law of the jungle. Otherwise, they are simply disobeying the code of the game. In

addition, many players understood the characteristics of the game and considered the domination of hunting fields as a natural phenomenon in the *Lineage II* world.

Now, huge clans exist in all servers... I think that DK's domination of Lair of Antharas (hunting field for high-level players) is caused not by their evil mind but by their strong power. In other servers, huge clans can't dominate there because they are less strong than DK. They are not enough strong to claim their interests by domination of hunting fields.... The domination of DK is caused by the absence of the rivals... I think that humans are selfish by nature. The enjoyment of *Lineage II* comes from the conflict between the selfish. By using the scarcity of resources, this game makes conflict between players....

<Yoragi. (2004, February 9). "DK United is not rubbish" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

DK's domination was not unique, but rather common in the *Lineage II* world. Although DK argued that they were evil, their domination arose from the code and nature of the game. The strongest DK clan deserved to get the fruits of victory. Therefore, many players and clans accepted DK's domination and wanted to be their friends rather than resisting them. DK and their followers showed a "dominant reading" of the game. They understood the code of the game and the dominant gaming culture well. For them, the "law of the jungle" was inevitable in the *Lineage II* world, which was designed by NC Soft. Therefore, they found effective ways of playing for gaining power, fun, and interest within those codes and that culture.

Furthermore, DK's tyranny was getting stronger, and they killed other players not only for their dominance and controlling hunting field, but also for fun. Many players suffered brutal killings. These were often described as "massacres" in Bartz.

I saw that DK's killers surrounded one female dwarf character. They said that they were killing "all female dwarf characters" because of the war against one female dwarf clan. They mocked her and gave her ten seconds for escape. How could she escape from them in ten seconds? She was a pitiful dwarf, the slowest race in *Lineage II*. I cried with anger while watching her death. But I just said again and again, "it's not my business... it's not my business..." Many other players saw it, but nobody helped her...

<TVgamegwang. (2004, June 21). "Brutality of DK" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

I'm a user of the 12th server. I'm sorry that I meddled in a problem of the Bartz server. But I say to users in Bartz..... Why don't users and clan leaders resist DK? Why do they maintain neutrality? Why do low level users only say, "We are too weak to resist"?

<Gogookinseng. (2004, January 31). "Pitiful Bartz players" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Many players were outraged by their tyranny, but most of them did not express this or try to resist. Many players even watched the massacre; they were indifferent to it. It's just a game, and the rules of the game allowed this situation. Therefore, many clans declared neutrality in the war between DK and anti-DK factions. Also, some players in other server knew the situation of Bartz, but they just felt pity for Bartz players. It was just a problem in the same "game", but

different “server” world. It was generally held that the problem of Bartz should be solved by the players in Bartz alone. In severe cases, players might stop playing or move to other worlds, having a miserable playing experience due to DK’s oppression.

I’m leaving Bartz server. I have a level 50 character in Bartz. But I am shocked that DK United captured and control the Lair of Antharas... The tyranny of DK is too brutal... Recently, my friend’s clan was disbanded because of the pressure of DK. That’s ridiculous... There is no hope in the first server.

<Asungyi. (2004, May 5). “I’m leaving Bartz server” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Castronova (2007b) argues that more and more people immigrate to the virtual game world for enjoying fun. He describes this as an “exodus” to the virtual world. However, DK’s dictatorship gave rise to a different kind of exodus within the virtual world. Players could avoid DK’s overbearing domination easily by exiting the game or moving to another virtual world rather than resisting, because it was not the real world but just one of the virtual worlds. Consequently, many players moved to another world during the dictatorship of DK.

Following Hall (1980), this can be seen as the operation of a “dominant reading” and a “negotiated reading” of the game. In the “dominant reading,” DK could read the dominant code of *Lineage II* and gaming culture—they constructed a rigid community of clan, followed the “law of the jungle,” “the power worship,” and “winner takes all” principles, and practiced their strong power in the conflict between players. Their activities simply took the lead in the reproduction of the dominant gaming culture. Moreover, many players accepted the status of

dominance of DK. They considered the dominant code of game and gaming culture as naturalized law, and justified or supported the dominance of DK in the game world.

Many other players showed a “negotiated reading” of the game. They understood and accepted the dominant code of game and gaming culture, though their position of reading showed the “mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements” (Hall, 1980, p. 137). They accepted the dominance of DK, but they recognized the brutality of DK’s playing, or the problems of the game system or gaming culture by their situational conditions. Those positions are often characterized by a declaration of neutrality. Even these characters represented their helplessness by the exodus to another virtual world or by leaving the game. Therefore, in dominant and negotiated readings, the players acquiesce to the code of the game and the dominant gaming culture. The code is allowed by the game designer, and players can enjoy the game as DK does under the rule and code of the game. Power is the most important element in the game. If a player doesn’t want to be a loser or a refugee, the character should be strong, or should not resist them and simply follow the dominant order.

3.2 Oppositional Reading: Resistance to the Dominant Order

Not all players in Bartz accepted the dominance of DK. Some players and clans had made persistent efforts at resistance. However, most players regarded this as a power struggle among specific clans. Alternately, it was considered as hopeless resistance to the absolute power. Anti-DK clans were too weak, because the hunting fields for leveling were dominated or controlled by DK. In late 2003, DK established a division of killer groups to eliminate all of the resistance. This group was considered to be a “conciliation committee to resolve conflicts (*Boonjaeng Jojung Wewonhoi*).” The committee justified their activities as efforts to mediate conflicts

among clans; however, their true objective was eliminating all potential risks of DK domination. Castronova (2005) notes that the virtual world is filled with anarchy and that the guild is not an effective political organization, because the leader of the community lacks the necessary tools for governance—taxation, litigation, military, police, prisons, etc (p. 210-215). However, DK exhibited the power of a dictator—they established a rigid organization and hierarchy to control the game world, collected revenues from taxes and monopolized hunting fields, and wielded the power and authority to regulate other players' activities. The committee was a law enforcement authority, similar to the police force in a dictatorship.

The committee even massacred innocent players during the “quiz show massacre (*Janghak Quiz Sagun*).” DK declared that they would kill all Chinese gold farmers because they spoiled the market of the Bartz server. Gold farming had flourished since the *Lineage I* period, and many Korean players or PC bangs have run huge gold farming businesses since then. This model of gold farming rapidly spread to East Asia, and hundreds of Chinese gold farmers entered the world of Korean MMORPGs during the period from 2003-2004 (Chan 2006, Huhh, 2008, Heeks, 2008). Chinese gold farmers become an object of hatred and racism on the part of MMORPG players (Steinkuehler, 2006; Nakamura, 2007).

Lineage II was the most popular game in South Korea during the period from 2003-2004. Many Chinese gold farmers ran their businesses with cheap labor. Korean players tended to despise Chinese gold farmers due to racism, and to the disturbance experienced by the in-game economy. Following those emotions, DK and the committee decided to kill all Chinese gold farmers. To identify Chinese gold farmers, the committee gave quizzes about the general knowledge of Korea, for example, “Who is the founder of *Chosun* (the last dynasty of Korea)?”, “When did the Korean War break out?”, and so on. The players who did not answer were

regarded as Chinese gold farmers and were killed by the committee. DK members even gave ridiculous quizzes for enjoying PK or eliminating all potential enemies of DK domination, for example, “Sing the four verses of the Korean national anthem”. If the players resisted, the revenge was taken by DK until they left Bartz. The activities of the committee seemed to secure the domination of DK.

However, many players began to realize that most victims of DK domination were not Chinese gold farmers or even resisting clans but rather “general players.”

It’s ridiculous. There is no difference between Hanhim and Hanhaebingnyo (the chiefs of the committee) and Chinese players. What is different between DK’s gold farming office and Chinese gold farmers? Is it fair that the committee kills Chinese players? Do you know why they are doing it? Because DK is afraid of the fall in the price of Adena (game money) induced by Chinese gold farmers... DK and Chinese gold farmers are competitors in the gold farming market...Can anyone answer such questions during game play? Then, are we Chinese gold farmers who deserve to be killed? Are Hanhim and Hanhaebingnyo the presidents of the *Lineage II* world?... Anyone who cheers the committee’s murders should probe their consciences—Is the committee justifiable?

<Nanneruljalanda (2003, November 3). “The cause of killing Chinese by Hanhim and Hanhaebingny” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Gamers realized that the activities of DK were not executed for the benefit of the players in Bartz, but rather for their dominance and profits. In the interests of both the virtual and the real world, DK needed to secure its dictatorship. DK’s policies also made many players angry. Firstly, DK raised the tax rate from 10 to 15 percent in the castle. In the castle’s shop, low-level

players could buy good items for play. DK's tax increase was a great shock to them. Second, DK tried to control the "Lair of Antharas"—a famous hunting field for non-DK players. DK's policies astounded many players, who then realized the harmful effect of DK domination. General players were being used as pawns for DK's fun and profit—The committee's massacres showed the truth. Many players reported DK's domination and monopolization of hunting fields to NC Soft. They also reported the use of automated bots and gold farming, which represented violations of the EULA (End-user license agreement). However, NC Soft answered that the domination of hunting fields was customary playing activity in *Lineage II*, so NC Soft did not intervene in the players' affairs. Therefore, players were required to address this domination on their own terms.

Hunting fields are not DK's, but all players' possessions.....The current situation of the Bartz server is comparable to the domination of gangs and anarchy. Now, Bartz is standing at the crossroads of being a blessed or cursed server. The future will be decided by the power of grassroots movements. I don't want to play those who follow DK and rule other players as in the colonial period...

<Ddulabuolinda. (2004, May 11). Reply to Tongdaejji's post "Anyone who think that the first server is a cursed server" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

It's just a game, but many players began to reject the code of the game—"the law of the jungle" and "the winner takes all." Monopoly and domination were no longer allowed. DK's play was similar to the tactics of gangs, and the situation in Bartz was one of anarchy or dictatorship. The virtual world was more horrible than its real-life counterpart.

Someone says, “Don’t confuse this with the real. It’s just a game.” But, everybody knows this. I also know it well. If this is not the real world, why I’m going to resist to DK?

I answer: “Only those who have experienced tyranny know.”

Online gaming is one of a virtual world. We have characters, and have a deep affection for them. So, under the tyranny such as DK’s, we cannot help resisting to it for our characters. Also, I think that the game world is another version of our world.. Therefore, we should realize justice in the virtual world, just like in the real world... To us it’s a real problem because our characters live in the virtual world in *Lineage II*.....

<Unknown. (2004 June 16, 2004). Reply to “All users of *Lineage II*, Rise up!” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The game is not just a game. Not only is it deeply connected to the real world, but it is also “another real world” for players. The avatar is constructed by the negotiation with the persona of real player (Pearce, 2009; Taylor, 2006a). The “player’s soul and deep persona [are] expressed” through the avatar (Pearce, 2009, p. 22-23). Therefore, the avatars of players in Bartz were not just puppets, but were “another us.” However, these avatars were suffering horrible tyranny and domination in “another real world.” Castronova (2005b) notes that the physical environment of the game world can be constructed as desired, but the social environment is no different from the real human world (p. 7). Players connected the status of Bartz to human history. From history, players learned the lessons of resistance and adapted these lessons to the virtual world. The game world does not have to be just a jungle, but can be the ideal world with “freedom, justice and benevolence” (Lee, 2005b, p. 97-98).

The real history of Bartz begins from now on. Before, our history was filled with misery and humiliation. We cannot tolerate this anymore. In our history, people who flattered and obeyed the Japanese government in the colonial period or dictatorship earned power and wealth, but now, people's power doesn't allow them anymore. Anyone who dreams of dictatorship will be eliminated by the people. Comparing this to Bartz, DK and followers are similar with colonial governor or dictators and their followers. Bartz Alliance and the supporters are people who resist this dictatorship.....

<Ddajang. (2004, June 15). "Eliminate DK and their followers from Bartz" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Now, general users have begun to support Bartz Alliance. With general users, there is no possibility of losing. As with German anti-Nazi policy after the Second World War, we must eliminate them thoroughly...

<Ddajang. (2004, June 16). "Candlelight demonstration in Bartz (expel Nazis in Bartz)" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

DK's play was not just game play. It was experienced as a "real dictatorship," "real colonial rule," or "real Nazis." In contrast, the anti-DK movement was regarded as individuals who had pledged to resist injustice. On May 8, 2004, the *Red Revolution* clan surprisingly captured DK United's Giran castle and declared a zero-percent taxation rate. The Genesis clan, which was one of the main clans in DK United, surrendered to the anti-DK factions due to the internal conflict within DK. The Bartz Alliance was established by anti-DK clans. Although the Bartz Alliance was weaker than DK, its members were confident. On June 14, 2004, the first Long-Underwear

Corps—a group of low-level players who resisted against DK—appeared in Dragon Valley and became the symbol of democracy in the game world.

While Underwear Corps gathers its power and fights against DK dictatorship, neutral clans and bystanders hunt mobs. Aren't you ashamed? How long will you allow DK's rule and control?

<Assekiwoogi. (2004, June 16, 2004). Reply to "The Long-Underwear Corps, apostles of peace from all servers" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

I think that the activity of the Long-Underwear Corps is the same as a movement for democracy. Someone laughed at me, but it is certainly a movement for democratic resistance to dictatorship...

<Baramnara. (2004, June 18). "Participation in the Long-Underwear Corps" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Do you know the movie *For whom the bell tolls*?... The Bartz server is Spain. DK is Franco's faction. The Bartz Alliance is Republican. The Long-Underwear Corps is the International Brigade...

<Holyrobo. (2004, June 18). "The Long-Underwear Corps in the Movies" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

With the Bartz Alliance Forces and the Long-Underwear Corps, people sought to make the game world better and ideal. This movement was not orchestrated from the top, as with the power struggle of strong clans, but rather was achieved from the bottom. The movement sought to

eradicate the “law of the jungle,” the “winner takes all,” and “the worship of power” from the dominant gaming culture. DK was despised as a symbol of shameful dictatorship or tyranny—even Akirus’s highest level and power were regarded as a shameful result of the domination of hunting fields. All Bartz players should rise to eliminate dictatorship in the game world. Wark (2007) maintains that “[t]he gamer is not interested in citizens” (p. 012), and that “the gamer is not really interested in faith, although a heightened rhetoric of faith may fill the void carved out of the soul by the insinuations of gamespace” (p. 013). However, in Bartz server, gamers began to be interested in playing the citizen and in faith to make the better game world for their “another us”—they rejected the DK dictatorship and dominant gaming culture, as well as the dominant code of *Lineage II* enforced by NC Soft.

Hall (1980) says that “oppositional reading” means that the audience recognizes the dominant code of message and opposes it (pp. 134-138). Players who resisted DK refused the dominant reading of the game world and developed an oppositional code to find an alternative. The dominant code of *Lineage II* and the dominant gaming culture— “the law of jungle,” “power worship,” and “winner takes all”—was subverted, and the players tried to make a better or ideal virtual world from the bottom-up. The game was not just a game, but another real world for players. Moreover, avatars were not just puppets for players’ fun in game space, but were citizens in the virtual world. In light of this, the Bartz Liberation War was more similar to a revolution in real world than game play in the virtual world. “For them, *Lineage II* is not ‘the virtual world— players can easily leave anytime,’ but ‘another real world— people should defend against dictatorship for justice’” (Suria, 2008c). Hall (1980) argues, “One of the most significant political moment is the point when events which are normally signified and decoded in a negotiate way begin to be given an oppositional reading” (p. 138). The players of the Bartz

server began to operate with the oppositional reading of the game and gaming culture, and the Bartz Liberation War entered on a new phase—the massive participation of neutral clans and the Long-Underwear Corps in the war for resistance.

3.3 Oppositional Reading and Playing for Resistance: Emergence of the Long-Underwear Corps

The Long-Underwear Corps—a revolutionary group of newly created, low-level avatars equipped with basic armor and weapons—was the most important participant in the Bartz Liberation War. In most stories, the appearance of the Long-Underwear Corps occurred at a critical point in the war. In spite of their weakness and low level, the Long-Underwear Corps resisted DK dictatorship due to their numbers and creative tactics. So, the Long-Underwear Corps is a symbol of grassroots power and democracy. Their resistance and creativity made the Bartz Liberation War an unprecedented event in Korean game history.

The Long-Underwear Corps had unique characteristics: Low level and basic equipments, creative tactics, free participation and flexible organization, and solidarity beyond the boundary of the servers. Firstly, the participants of Long-Underwear Corps were low-level and newly created avatars. Most of the Long-Underwear Corps were around level 10, and it was easy to reach level 10 within a few hours of play. Also, they equipped basic weapons and armors. Newly created avatars equip squire's shirt and pants which have the lowest defensive stats, and the Long-Underwear Corps only used them. The avatars looked like they were wearing long underwear or long johns, so they were called the Long-Underwear Corps. And the avatars were primarily equipped with bone daggers, which are one of the cheapest and weakest weapons.

Lineage II has a strict hierarchy system of level. Higher level avatars have higher stats, and can equip better items. Therefore, power and social class are determined by an avatar's level and equipment. The Long-Underwear Corps' social position was the lowest in the game world, and their basic armor (underwear) represented humility and powerlessness. In contrast, DK clan's position was the highest. Akirus, who was one of the DK leaders, was the first to reach the highest level, 75. Most of DK's members were above level 60. They also had good equipment because they dominated the hunting fields. According to the statistics from the Bartz server on November 25, 2003, 85.9% of the players were below level 40 (Lee, 2005b, p. 83). This statistic showed that most players were in the grassroots class, and a small number of high classes, such as the DKs, dominated the Bartz world. Therefore, the Long-Underwear Corps inherently represented the will and power of the grassroots class.

Although each of the members of the Long-Underwear Corps was weak, they turned the tables using creative tactics. Their tactics and power were the result of their massive numbers. When the Long-Underwear Corps first appeared, there were about tens of avatars, but the participants increased explosively, and thousands of Long-Underwear Corps participants appeared during the climax of the war. The Long-Underwear Corps' levels and weapons were too weak to damage high level players through the normal attacks outlined in the *Lineage II* rules, so they invented new, creative ways to attack by combining the rules. The Long-Underwear Corps used its massive numbers to attack en-masse and create human barricades. Their tactics were complicated and well-designed, enabling them to fight against high level players. In en-masse attacks, hundreds of the Long-Underwear Corps participants attacked one DK player. When avatars reached level 5, they learned the "mortal blow" skill. This skill gave generated damages of 30-40 HP with certain possibility, regardless of the enemy's defensive



Figure 2 The Long-Underwear Corps' en-masse attack.

stats. Theoretically, 100 participants from the Long-Underwear Corps could damage one high-level DK avatar by 3000-4000 HP in a massive attack. However, due to their powerful healers, DK avatars could easily recover from this amount of damage. Therefore, the Long-Underwear Corps first attacked DK healers, and then they attacked DK buffers and, finally, DK fighters. Healers and buffers had low defensive stats, so they were easily killed by the Long-Underwear Corps participants. Without healers or buffers, fighters could not endure the Long-Underwear Corps' en-masse attacks (Lee, 2005b, pp. 93-95). The Long-Underwear Corps overcame the gap between its low level and DK player's high levels by combining the rules. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) explained this phenomenon using the concept of emergence, which they defined as: "systems generating complex and unpredictable patterns of behavior from simple rules" (p. 158). *Lineage II's* rules of combat are constructed from sets of simple rules. The game calculated avatars' power from their quantified stats, and the amount of damage an avatar could inflict was

dictated by the rules. High-level players' attacks resulted in greater damage. In contrast, low-level players could not kill high-level players. However, through the combination of simple rules, the Long-Underwear Corps invented an effective and subversive new pattern of combat to overcome DK's power.

Moreover, the Long-Underwear Corps created an emergent playing of defense. Using its massive number, the corps created human barricades, blocking the road. They drew a defensive line by dropping Adena (game money) and blocked the road. Avatars could not pass other avatars, so DK players had to kill Long-Underwear Corps to break through the barricade. However, DK players received PK penalties for killing the Long-Underwear Corps avatars. They were then ambushed by archers from the Bartz Liberation Army, and the Long-Underwear Corps attacked the DK avatars in purple or chaos status. The Long-Underwear Corps and the Bartz Alliance Army did not receive any PK penalties because DK was in purple or chaos status, and the DKs even lost their equipment due to PK penalties. The dreaded DK forces lost the battle of Dragon Valley due to a human barricade. If the Long-Underwear Corps participants were killed



Figure 3 The Long-Underwear Corps' human barricade.

by a DK, they just gathered reviving points in the nearest town and returned to the battlefield. When they died, the Long-Underwear Corps did not lose their equipment or EXPs. For the Long-Underwear Corps, death was nothing; it was even enjoyable. However, high-level DK players were afraid of death because they lost both equipment and EXP.

These tactics effectively defended important strategic points and interrupted DK's maneuvers. This emergent play of defense came from the set of simple rules: PK penalties and the rule that avatars cannot pass other avatars. Actually, strong Korean MMORPG clans dominated hunting fields using human barricade tactics in games such as *Lineage I* and *II*, *The Kingdom of Wind*, and so on. The strong clans watched players at the narrow points of hunting fields, so they could block the entrance and dominate the field. The Long-Underwear Corps borrowed and redeveloped the enemy's defense. Shohat and Stam (1994) suggest the concept of media jujitsu, which is a strategy of using the power of the dominant culture for the resistance or subversion of the dominant culture (p. 328). The Long-Underwear Corps utilized the strategy of media jujitsu in the MMORPG using the emergent pattern in the game.

In addition to the en-masse attacks and human barricades, the Long-Underwear Corps employed various patterns of emergence. During the Bartz Liberation Army attack, the Long-Underwear Corps protected the Bartz Alliance Army's archers, healers, and buffers using human shields tactics, and during the battle, they requested one-on-one trades with DK players. Due to the continued interruption of trade requests, DK players could not control their avatars well. Also, players made their avatars names similar to DK leaders' names. For example, following a DK leader *ShadowYeosol*, they named some of their avatars *ShadowYeosot*, *ShadowYeosok*, and so on, and then sent false commands to DK forces (Suria, 2008c).

No one anticipated these tactics before the Long-Underwear Corps used them, not even NC Soft. *Lineage II* players admired the Long-Underwear Corps' creativity and bravery. The impact of the Long-Underwear Corps was the subversion of the dominant code of the game—the law of jungle and the worship of power. Before the Long-Underwear Corps, low-level players were always weak and useless in a war. However, through their emergent tactics, a mass of weak players showed their formidable power. Even Akirus, who was the strongest player in *Lineage II*, was killed by Long-Underwear Corps' en-mass attacks. Therefore, these emergent tactics were greatly enjoyed by players. Many participants in the Long-Underwear Corps liked killing high-level players with newly-created low-level avatars. DK's strong characters were degraded to "strong mobs" for fun and also dropped good items. These kinds of enjoyable experiences had never been imagined before the Long-Underwear Corps emerged on the Bartz server.

30~50 players attacked just one DK player. Was he killed? Yes, he was killed! No escape from us..... It was really really enjoyable play, which I had not experienced in our 15th server yet.

<Kwuedoshinnye, (2004 June 16). "Diary of participation in Underwear Corps" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

Our Teon server is too peaceful; so many players are tired of hunting mobs and feeling bored. For them, I recommend to participating in Underwear Corps in Bartz to feel excitement and enjoyment. It's really exciting to kill level 70 characters with level 5 characters.

<Daguchi. (2004, June 17). "Bartz and Teon servers" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The rigid hierarchy of level and item was collapsed by the power and will of grassroots players. The long underwear and bone daggers no longer represented a humble position; they represented the justice and power of the grassroots players, and they represented democracy. Even their long-underwear and bone daggers represented the fun of subversion.

Moreover, Long-Underwear Corps was characterized by free participation and flexible organization, and not by a given community system of the game, such as a clan or alliance. Members only had to create a new avatar on the Bartz server and level up to learn basic skills, and they were able to join a massive group of other Long-Underwear Corps players in the town. Players participated for a variety of reasons, such as to enjoy killing DK, to resist dictatorship or the dominant gaming culture, or to build human relationships at PC bangs. However, they had a common objective: the resistance against dictatorship in the game. In terms of Bartle's (2004) classification of player types, the Long-Underwear Corps created a new type of "killer." The avatars for Long-Underwear Corps were intended to fight against high-level players, so they were always at the battlefields, and some even enjoyed killing. At the same time, the objective of their killing was not to dominate other players, but to liberate them from domination, like guardians or revolutionaries—This is completely different from DK, and thus was opposed to the goals of DK.

Most of participants chose to play as Elven fighters, because elves had the fastest speed among races, and when they were killed, could quickly return to the battlefield. For identification and unity, they each displayed the message "Join a party" in yellow on the head of their avatar. They entered the battlefield based on information from bulletin board posts, or under the guidance of the Bartz Alliance Army, but did not follow a rigid chain of command. Players urged

others to gather at defense points in bulletin board posts, for example writing “Please defend Dragon Valley!” to bring the Long-Underwear Corps to the entrance of the valley. Moving together with the Bartz Alliance Forces allowed them to filter out false information from DK. Also, numerous participants scattered to monitor DK’s movements in all areas of the Bartz server. Without any organization or chain of command, they could easily share information about DK.

The Long-Underwear Corps’ flexible and intangible organization demonstrated a new means of community-building in MMORPGs. Before this, the dominant in-game community culture was constructed based on a clan or guild system. Players created an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006) through the formation of a clan or guild given to them by the game system. For players, their clans or guilds were the most important markers of identity, acting like nationalities in the real world. Clan wars were thus similar to wars between nations. The Long-Underwear Corps transcended the boundaries of clan or guild systems. In gathering to resist DK without a clan or alliance system they created a different “imagined community” beyond the limitations of such systems, through in-game chat, internet bulletin boards, common visual identifiers, and common goals. The community even expanded beyond the boundaries of servers.

One of the most significant characteristics of the Long-Underwear Corps was this solidarity across servers. Interestingly, the Bartz Liberation War and Long-Underwear Corps became common interests of all *Lineage II* players. Many players sympathized with Bartz Alliance and Long-Underwear Corps, and they even participated in Long-Underwear Corps voluntarily. The Bartz Liberation War and Long-Underwear Corps were supported not only by Bartz’s players, but also by most of *Lineage II* players.

Before June 16, 2004, most players in *Lineage II* were indifferent to Bartz. Although some players knew about it from refugees from Bartz, or read the posts about Bartz at the bulletin board, it was just seen as a terrible situation of another world. However, one often-quoted post at PlayForum's bulletin board moved player's hearts:

All players of *Lineage II*, Rise up!

The time has come. We've requested participation of general players; at last, our hard efforts have come to fruition. I always say that Bartz Alliance cannot win the war without participation of general players, and the mass of the weak players, even though they are only level 1, could damage DK United physically and mentally. Now they begin to rise—it's Long-Underwear Corps. From level 1 new characters to sub-characters of power players, they gathered at the front of Dragon's Dungeon, and they even killed Akirus who was the strongest player in *Lineage II*. At this time, Long-Underwear Corps is formed by not only players of Bartz, but also players of other servers for justice transcending the boundary of all servers.....Now DK United is in confusion by them. Also, Bartz Alliance is surprised by them. We could anticipate that players of all servers would rise up for Bartz server. It is a really great situation. It is not important whether they are strong or weak, but that general players of all servers participate in resisting strong ruling clans... The Long-Underwear Corps represents the will of general players. They show the power of general players. It is not only a war in Bartz server, but also a war for all servers dominated by brutal strong clans. So, I strongly request that you participate in Underwear Corps for justice.... We must give hope to general players. We must give confidence to general players. No more dictatorship in all the *Lineage II* world—Rise up! From this

time, I am creating a new character in Bartz and participating in the Long-Underwear Corps. And, on day, I will be confident in saying that I was a proud participant of the Long-Underwear Corps in the Bartz Liberation War.

From Gyeomdaengyidaewang on 9th server.

<Gyeomdaengyidaewang. (2004, June 1). “All players of *Lineage II*, Rise Up!” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

This was a critical moment for the Bartz Liberation War and *Lineage I*. This was a critical moment for the Bartz Liberation War and *Lineage I*. In most of the writings about the war, the appearance of this post is regarded as an important event (Lee, 2005b; Myung, 2008; Suria, 2008d). Like a manifesto of revolution, it appealed for participation in the Long-Underwear Corps. Many players on other servers sympathized with the Bartz Alliance and the Long-Underwear Corps, and they were outraged by DK’s tyranny. However, the critical impact was that players of other servers began to realize the situation of all servers. Other servers’ players began to move from negotiated to oppositional readings of the game and gaming culture, that “significant moment” of radicalization Hall describes (1980).

The situations of many other servers are similar with Bartz’s. So, there is keen interest in how the situation of Bartz will develop. I read some posts about Bartz. DK is such a son of a bitch! I can’t imagine how players of first server have suffered under DK’s domination.

<Saba. (2004, June 15). “I’m a player in another server” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

On many servers, the tyranny of strong clans was similar to the Bartz situation. The only difference was that Bartz server's tyranny was more extreme than other servers'. Many players began to express their angers at the tyranny of the strong on their server. Also, players of "Blessed" server—a server with no dictatorship—realized that their server was becoming terrible, like Bartz. Therefore, as an example of people's power, many players decided to participate in the Long-Underwear Corps in Bartz—the first and the biggest server in *Lineage II*.

To encourage participation in Underwear Corps, they used various methods. For example, they made music videos, Internet cartoons, and parody images of the Long-Underwear Corps. Some players broadcasted the battle and the situation of the war via the Internet broadcasting, or reported news of them on bulletin board like a war correspondent. Those were widely distributed via the Internet; many people enjoyed them and subsequently participated in the Long-Underwear Corps. Also, in June and July, 2004, media reported news of the Bartz Liberation War. The war became of great interest for Korean online gamers. The Bartz alliance and the Long-Underwear Corps gained legitimacy for their resistance, and DK became a symbol of evil in the Korean online games.



Figure 4 “Join the Long-Underwear Corps.”

There were a massive number of participants from other servers. During the war, participants from other servers stopped playing their main avatars, and easily created a new one in Bartz. Also, refugees, who had left Bartz due to DK's oppression, returned to Bartz. These

participants could come and go among the virtual worlds freely and easily. After the war, most of them would return to their main world.

I'm from 15th server. I think that DK's controlling of the Liars of Antharas should be resisted by all user... At lunch time, I made level 5 Long-Underwear Corps character. From this day, I'm going to stop playing my main character on the 15th server, and to participate in the Long-Underwear Corps for Bartz. Until the end of DK's dominance, I will help them as much as I can....

<Dasomgisa. (2004, June 18). "I'm a player of 15th server" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

I was a player in Bartz, but I moved to 21th server due to DK's dominance. I will participate in the Long-Underwear Corps with my level 37 character in Bartz. I will fight until the end of DK.

<rph2. (2004, June 16). "I will participate in Long-Underwear Corps" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

In the climax of the war, thousands of Long-Underwear Corps members from all servers participated in the war to resist DK in Bartz as well as the dominant gaming culture. Through the community of the Long-Underwear Corps, they were able to construct the solidarity across all servers in *Lineage II*. They became the biggest but an intangible group of players in *Lineage II*.

Now, the Long-Underwear Corps has become the biggest Clan in *Lineage II*. Also, they are getting bigger and bigger.

<Menerphilsu. (2004, June 17). Reply to “I’m participating in the Long-Underwear Corps from 8th server” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The solidarity of the Long-Underwear Corps revealed the conflicts among the Long-Underwear Corps, DK, and NC Soft. DK was stumped by the large-scale participation of the Long-Underwear Corps, and members complained that the Long-Underwear Corps disrupted other players’ game play with human barricade and lagging. NC Soft’s game master even helped Akirus and other DK players to escape when they were surrounded by the Long-Underwear Corps, and NC Soft even announced that the company would regulate the interrupting of other players’ play in large numbers. For NC Soft, DK players were important customers. They were the strongest and most desirable players in all of the *Lineage II* world. However, the Long-Underwear Corps and the Bartz Alliance were outraged at the game master, and claimed that not the Long-Underwear Corps but DK had disrupted other players’ game play, by dominating hunting fields and brutal massacres.

There is a new announcement from NC Soft, which informs that “The activity of blocking a specific area will be strictly regulated. We request the disbandment of the characters who are blocking the entrance of Liar of Antharas.” This is ridiculous. How could DK have blocked the dungeons for one year? But, as NC Soft replied, “We cannot intervene with the conflict between players. Players should solve the problems by themselves.” So it seems that NC Soft is making contradictory statements that support DK.

<Yumeo. (2004, June 17). “Hot news—NC Soft supports DK.” in PlayForum’s *Lineage II* freeboard.>

To the Long-Underwear Corps and the Bartz Alliance, NC Soft was not their friend, but an enemy supporting DK. Anti-DK players strongly complained about these issues, and eventually NC Soft declared neutrality and a nonintervention policy in the Bartz Liberation War. For both anti-DK players and DK members, NC Soft's nonintervention policy was not satisfactory—NC Soft did not regulate the Long-Underwear Corps for DK, and did not regulate the domination of hunting fields for anti-DK players too.

However, with the massive participation of the Long-Underwear Corps, the Bartz Alliance seized a chance for victory. On June 19, the Bartz Alliance Force and the Long-Underwear Corps succeeded in capturing DK's Oren castle, and on 4 July, they heroically defended Gludio castle from DK's full attack. Eventually, on July 17, the Bartz Alliance Force and the Long-Underwear Corps dramatically captured Aden castle—the most important castle in the *Lineage II* world—and DK hid in the Tower of Insolence. Everybody enjoyed the victory of war in the Aden castle, which had been forbidden to general players in Bartz.

Hall (1980) says that the oppositional reading means that one “detotalizes the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (p. 138). The Long-Underwear Corps developed an oppositional reading of the dominant code of the game and the dominant gaming culture through the emergent pattern of playing the game. Inherently, the avatars of the Long-Underwear Corps were designed to resist and subvert the code of the game and the dominant gaming culture by players—the “law of the jungle,” “power worship,” and “winner takes all.” Taking advantage of emergent patterns of play, they created an effective way to resist the strong, and they subverted the code of the game—the weak beat the strong by their numbers, will, and creative tactics. Also, the emergence

of the Long-Underwear Corps provided a critical moment for the general players throughout the *Lineage II* world. Easy participation and flexible organization provided a chance to take action to resist. With the heroic activities of the Long-Underwear Corps, many players stopped being bystanders and created new avatars on the Bartz server and participated in the Long-Underwear Corps beyond server boundaries. It was a critical moment—players' negotiated reading changed into an oppositional reading of the game and gaming culture, and it drove their actions—playing for resistance.

4. HEGEMONY: RESISTANCE FROM THE BARTZ TO THE REAL WORLD

The Bartz Liberation War was not a complete success. Due to divisions in the Bartz Alliance, the Dragon Knight (DK) clan was able to revive its dictatorship, causing disappointment for many players. At the same time, the war and the actions of the Long-Underwear Corps influenced other servers, other games, and even the real world. This chapter regards the concept of hegemony, defined as “the process of establishing dominance within a culture, not by brute but by voluntary consent, by leadership rather than rule” (Proctor, 2004, p. 26), it examines how the gaming culture of playing for resistance is negotiated as part of a cultural struggle for hegemony, and analyzes how playing for resistance is connected to real-world culture and politics.

4.1 Expansion of Resistance from Bartz to the Online Game Culture

Although the Bartz Alliance Force and the Long-Underwear Corps captured the DK’s castles and hunting fields, including Dragon Valley and Aden castle, the DK hid in the Tower of Insolence and reorganized its clan and alliances. At the same time, the Bartz Alliance was divided by the trophies of war, such as castles and hunting fields, and some strong clans even engaged in the same bullying gaming methods that had characterized the DK, with the heroes of liberation becoming dictators and losing the support of other players. Eventually, an internal war broke out between the Red Revolution and Revenges clans, which were the most important clans in the Bartz Alliance. On December 2004, the DK revived itself and came to dominate the world of Bartz again. The DK’s revenge made it even more tyrannical and cruel, leading to “the second DK dictatorship period” (Suria, 2008d). Many players were disappointed in the Bartz Alliance

and the DK's revival, and most of the members of the Long-Underwear Corps returned to their main worlds, seemingly in failure.

In fact, the efforts of the Long-Underwear Corps came to fruition on other servers. Many participants from these other servers had experienced the power of grassroots cooperation and the fun of resistance, and realized that their servers were becoming worse, just like the Bartz server. They found that the best solutions to the emerging problems of dictatorship and tyranny lay in their own experience.

Although you play in a different server, you can show the power of all users in *Lineage II*. Moreover, we will organize the Long-Underwear Corps to resist strong clans' brutal tyranny and to protect general players' rights in any server, at any time. We will resist, and gather our power until the end of strong clans' tyranny in *Lineage II*.

<Baekmimawui. (2004, June 16). "Ask players of other servers for help" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The activity of the Long-Underwear Corps will not be limited to the Bartz server. They will show the end of tyranny of strong clans in any server..... Whenever strong clans dominate and control the general players, the Long-Underwear Corps will appear and confront to them. It's a resistance of the weak.

<Heavygeyal. (2004 June 17). "The Long-Underwear Corps marks a new era in *Lineage II*" in PlayForum's *Lineage II* freeboard.>

The Long-Underwear Corps could easily be organized on any server and at any time. All that was needed was the creation of a new avatar to participate. Also, the solidarity of the group

beyond the boundary of servers was a valuable asset for resistance anywhere in the world of *Lineage II*. When any server began to be dominated by the tyranny of a strong clan, the players would request the mobilization of the Long-Underwear Corps through internet communities. The Long-Underwear Corps thus became a symbol of resistance for all players of *Lineage II*. Applying Hall (1980)'s concepts, one could say that the participants of the Long-Underwear Corps learned to read the game world not locally (on one server) but globally (on all servers), carrying out an oppositional reading of the dominant code of the game system and gaming culture.

On October 2006, a strong clan dominating the 26th server insulted and killed forty players in a raid party. The massacre triggered the resistance of general players and neutral clans, who requested the support of the Long-Underwear Corps. Hundreds of Long-Underwear Corps members organized themselves to support the anti-domination movement. The anti-domination forces and the Long-Underwear Corps captured the main castles of the dominant clan and won the war. On September 2008, players on the 23rd server began a resistance movement against the Yi clan and its allies, who dominated the world of the server, owning all castles and trying to control important hunting fields and monopolize special mobs for events, excluding all other players and increasing the rates of taxation in their castles. Those policies enraged the general players in the 23rd servers, who enlisted the help of the Long-Underwear Corps in carrying out a siege of the Yi clan's castles. This was then followed by a successful resistance movement on the 12th server on December 2008, and a number of other similar efforts on other servers, leading to both victories and failures.

After the division and disbandment of DK, the Long-Underwear Corps then reorganized on the Bartz server. When the DK clan's descendants then tried to take over the Bartz server, the

neutral clans resisted, starting the second Bartz liberation war on March 2007, which involved thousands of Long-Underwear Corps members and ended with the defeat of the remnants of the DK. The Long-Underwear Corps and their allies had spread across all of the worlds of *Lineage II*, freeing normal players from the tyranny and dictatorship of strong clans. Their new method of playing for resistance established a cultural hegemony in the world of *Lineage II*.

The methods of the Long-Underwear Corps also spread to other games. In November 2005, anti-dictatorship players appeared in *Lineage I* (PlayForum, 22 November 2005). Dictatorial methods of dominating the game world had been invented in *Lineage I* before spreading to other MMORPGs. The Gardria server had a long history with a notorious dictatorship by one of the strongest clan alliances, which dominated all castles and hunting fields. General players and anti-dictatorship factions began to band together to resist the dictatorship, and succeeded in capturing Kent castle. The players used their sub-avatars instead of their main avatars, which gained them comparisons to the Long-Underwear Corps. In interviews with PlayForum (Elly, 2005, 22 November), which is an online game web-magazine, participants in this struggle said:

I am sad that the domination of hunting fields by strong clans are taken for granted in Gardria as well as other servers. We pay the same money for enjoying the game, and anyone who enjoys *Lineage I* has the rights to enjoy hunting in Tower of Insolence. The game company (NC Soft) does not create Tower of Insolence for only a few players. I hope that other servers' players rise like us in Gardria server.

Some groups of players justify the domination of hunting fields by saying, “The game is just a game.” I want to say to them that violence in cyberspace is the same as violence in the real world for the victims.

The story of the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps spread throughout online MMORPG communities, and stimulated discussion and power struggles in other game societies. For example, on one *World of Warcraft* South Korean server, roughly one hundred below-level-4 players in the Hordes advanced to Stormwind, which was the capital of the Alliance (Kim, 2005).

In spite of these resistance movements, dictatorships continued to dominate *Lineage II*, and many players grew tired of the game’s endless hunting play and fierce politics between players. The new western MMORPG, *World of Warcraft*, changed the landscape of the online game market and the dominant gaming culture in South Korea. By taking advantage of the popularity of Blizzard’s games, such as *Starcraft* and *Warcraft*, *World of Warcraft* gained sensational levels of popularity, providing new avenues for enjoyment that were different from those offered in typical Korean MMORPGs: various forms of in-game entertainment, easy leveling through quests, immersing stories, and less severe conflicts between players in terms of the faction system of the Hordes and Alliance. *Lineage II* lost popularity and numerous players migrated to *World of Warcraft*. In reaction, NC Soft then adapted the style of *World of Warcraft*, developing and publishing *Aion* (2008).

Many players still remember their experiences with the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps. Its story became legendary in the gaming world, as a part of the history of resistance in South Korean cyberspace. In online gaming communities, its story is often

brought up in discussing in-game politics and societies, and in reviews of new MMORPGs. Some people consider the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps to be a negative thing, arguing that the war was just a power struggle between strong clans or big gold farming factories, who successfully incited others to help them, as could be seen from the corrupt behavior of the liberators and the failure of the war. Others point out that the dominant code of Korean MMORPGs and gaming culture has not completely changed, with strong groups still worshipped and dominant in the game world. Overall, however, most people consider the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps to have had a positive influence, bringing about the unprecedented historical event of the first grassroots revolution in the game world, and demonstrating the potential power of grassroots resistance in cyberspace. They are also seen as having revealed problems inherent to Korean MMORPGs and the dominant gaming culture, providing an opportunity for reflection. In reviews of new MMORPGs, power and political systems are carefully considered, often in comparison with those of *Lineage II*, and this influences game developers, who try to construct balanced political systems in their games.

Moreover, up through their victory in the siege of Aden castle, the Bartz Alliance and the Long-Underwear Corps did not fail. This era of success is still remembered proudly by general players of *Lineage II*. Based on this, NC Soft decided to use the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps for commercial purposes. In 2011, to promote the new update of *Lineage II*, "Goddess of Destruction," NC Soft distributed a poster showing the official history of *Lineage II*. The poster's title was "The Call of Destiny: The strongest enemy in history, DK, is defeated," and it depicted the siege of Aden castle (see Figure 5). In the poster, the Long-Underwear Corps are fighting with the DK forces, and particularly with Akirus, who was the leader of the DK and the strongest player in all of the *Lineage II* worlds. The poster was



Figure 5 NC Soft's promotional poster about the Bartz Liberation War.
 “The Call of Destiny: The strongest enemy in history, DK, is defeated.”

displayed in thousands of PC bangs, where were the places of origin of MMORPG boom in South Korea, and resurrected memories of the war for many players.

Jenkins (2006) describes recent culture as “convergence culture,” describing new methods of media circulation and social, economic, and technological changes. Within convergence culture, the media market and consumers intersect or interact in new ways, actively and collectively participating in the process of media production and circulation from the bottom up. The Bartz Liberation War shows important characteristics of convergence culture. The players collectively constructed their own epic story of resistance in the MMORPG world, resisting not only DK but also NC Soft, which supported the dominant gaming code and culture. NC Soft responded by not only officially recognizing the history of resistance, but by appropriating the players' collective product for commercial purposes, demonstrating the

corporate commercialization of resistance in MMORPGs and the negotiated hegemony of playing for resistance in gaming culture.

Although the resistance of the Long-Underwear Corps could not change the dominant game culture entirely in South Korea, it deeply influenced it. Since the Bartz Liberation War, resistance movements have become common. The Bartz Liberation War involved brutal war and violence in the game world, but also involved the resistance for cultural struggle, which made it legendary in Korean gaming history, and led to the negotiated hegemony of playing for resistance in the dominant gaming culture.

4.2 Playing for Resistance beyond the Game World

The circulation of the stories of the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps has not been limited to the field of online games, and their widespread discussion on Internet continues until today, on bulletin boards of online communities, in blogs, and through social media outlets. Fan products related to the stories have also been widely distributed.³² Lee's (2005a) articles for the news magazine *Lineage-ron (On Lineage)* created a sensation online, while Suria's (2008) blog "History of the Bartz Liberation War" was linked to and shared throughout Internet bulletin boards and communities. For these reasons, many non-players of *Lineage II* or even non-gamers have gotten to know about these topics. In most stories and fan products, DK was described as devious, brutal, and evil, while the Long-Underwear Corps was portrayed as a symbol of the power of grassroots democracy and justice. Non-online gamers could easily understand the stories from the viewpoint of the dichotomy of good and evil.

The stories were also reproduced in print media, with Lee (2005b) publishing *Korean Digital Storytelling* about the Bartz Liberation War and digital storytelling. In it, Lee explains

³² See Appendix C.

that new forms of digital storytelling focus on the epic story and sublimity of the Long-Underwear Corps. Meanwhile, Myung (2008) published *Bartz Historia*, which described the history of Bartz Liberation War in novel form. Taking on the viewpoint of the Bartz Alliance, he depicts the process involved in the first and second Bartz Liberation Wars. More recently, Kang's (2011) novel, *Ghost (Yuryung)*, featured the story of a young North Korean defector, who escapes to South Korea. The protagonist experiences the irrationalities of capitalist society and faces many difficulties in real life, but he is a hero of the Long-Underwear Corps in the game world. Here, the Long-Underwear Corps is used to discuss identity crisis and the gap between the real and the gaming worlds. Some readers who had played *Lineage II* criticized this novel due to the poor description of *Lineage II* and the Long-Underwear Corps, and speculated that the writer had not played *Lineage II*. However, if this was true, it shows that the Long-Underwear Corps was widely known to non-players and could be used as a means of social criticism by them. *Ghost* gained wide recognition, even winning the Segye Literature Awards Grand Prize. These works have contributed to the popularization of the story of the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps.

From June to September 2012, the Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art is holding an art exhibition entitled "Bartz Revolutionary War," with the support of NC Soft. This exhibition has been designed to present art related to the affairs of cyberspace, identity issues in the game world, and other relevant topics, but is centered on the Bartz Liberation War, as it is regarded as the most important and popular event in the history of Korean cyberspace. This show how this piece of online history has gone beyond the boundaries of online gaming to influence other media.

The Bartz Liberation War has often been discussed with reference to human affairs in the real world. As Castronova (2005b) argues, the social environment of online game world is not

different from the real world, and thus can act as a valuable asset for examining real life. The online world can also influence players' outlooks on the real world. For example, players in the Bartz Liberation War learned to be skeptical about human nature, given the failure of the revolution involved.

I was a player on another server, but I also participated in Underwear Corps. It was so great. However, after the war, the players (the Bartz Alliance clans) who resisted against dictatorship suppressed other players..... Is it human nature?

<Jeomedaewang. (2010, September 28). Reply to "The story of the Bartz Liberation War - It's really cool!" in MLB Park's free board.>

The Long-Underwear Corps, organized by low-level characters who consist of 80% of population in the server, led the victory. They fought for justice by themselves. We can see it as democracy in the cyberspace. Justice was brought by them, but a new power repeated the fault of the previous dictators. Power inevitably generates corruption. Justice lost its power within the struggle for the interests. It's reality. The problems in the real world repeated in cyberspace.

<Gomdorian. (2011, July 17). "Bartz Liberation War" in Gomdorian's blog.>

Many individuals who read about or experienced the Bartz Liberation War were frustrated by the ultimate corruption of the heroes and liberators involved. Some argued that all human beings are egotistical by nature, and that the war demonstrated this, particularly as it involved a broad cross-section of individuals. Others felt that all power eventually leads to corruption and the suppression of the weak, whether in the real or the game world.

In some cases, individuals saw their experiences in the game world as indicating that there is hope of changing the real world. Although the Bartz Liberation War failed, it was seen by some as demonstrating the possibility of creating a better world through sacrifice and belief in ideals, despite the selfishness of human beings.

It is more interesting than a fantasy novel. But, it is not fiction. It is not just a game story.

It is a real story of people. We can find human nature in the story..... Most people seek profits, but the ideal is just a moment. However, our world can be changed by a few, who follow an ideal despite all sacrifices..... I remember when I was at the head of the Bartz Alliance Force, confronting DK's great number of forces, in the siege of Aden castle.

<nnnΩ. (2009, December 29). Reply to "The story of Bartz Liberation War" in Today's Humor's free board.>

For some players, their experiences extended to resistance in the real world. From May to June of 2008, massive candlelight protests occurred in South Korea. These were commonly considered to be anti-American demonstrations, as the ostensible reason for them was to protest US beef imports that may have carried mad cow disease. However, the aims of the protest were also to question the conservative South Korean government's policies of economic neo-liberalism, support for the rich and for conglomerates, construction of a canal for big construction companies, privatization of public systems, particularly the healthcare system, anti-liberal education reform, and control of the media. The protests were held every evening, attended by thousands of people who marched carrying candles. On June 10th, the anniversary of the democratization of South Korea, hundreds of thousands of protesters gathered in downtown

Seoul. These demonstrations were organized not by social movement organizations or by politicians, but by Internet users as an organized body of people.

Some participants were reminded of their experience with the Long-Underwear Corps. Like the actions of the Long-Underwear Corps, the protest was organized by an affiliated individuals rather than political parties or organizations. For them, the government was like the DK, and the protesters were the Long-Underwear Corps in the real world. These ideas were addressed directly online by protestors.

I played in the Bartz server.....I am going to participate in the candlelight protest. There is also DK in real world. I hope the Long-Underwear Corps people are real.

<Typhoon. (2008, June 24). Reply to, “Why the candlelight protest in *Lineage II* failed?” in Daum Agora.>

A great number of people gathered at the protest..... They looked like the Long-Underwear Corps. When they were shouting in protest, I was extremely excited.....

<Portionnogada. (2008, May 2). “I participated in the candlelight protest” in MMOG *Maple story* community board at Daum.>

When the protestors were forced to separate from each other, players were reminded of the lessons learned from the Bartz Liberation War, with one responding:

Anyone who likes to play games may have heard about the Bartz Liberation War. Now, I don't want divisions of our movement like that. We need to form a united and organized movement.....In the Bartz Liberation War, I had a famous character. However, who knew that the Bartz Alliance would collapse from division?...

<FairyTale. (2008, May 30). “Don’t you want to resist to the government?” in Daum Agora.>

Similar to the Bartz Liberation War, the candlelight protests failed. However, the experience of game was extended to the real world. During the Bartz Liberation War, the game world mirrored the real world, with the DK as dictators and the Long-Underwear Corps as the people. However, in the candlelight protest, the game world had begun to influence the real world. Participants carried out a resistance movement that, for some of them, was based on their experiences in the game world. The ties were made explicit by participants in these movements:

When I read about the Bartz Liberation War, I am reminded of the war and the hegemonic struggles in the real world, and it helps me understand the spin of people and dictatorship easily. To expand my understanding, the recent candlelight protest was not improvised, but rather, emerged from the experiences of resistance, like the Bartz Liberation War.

<Ildujayeon, (2006, September 6). “Book Review: Bartz Historia - the power of online game” in Ildujayeo’s blog.>

The experience of the Bartz Liberation War and Underwear Corps became valuable assets for real-world resistance. Although resistance in the game world involved brutal war and violence, its experience becomes a driving force of a cultural struggle for hegemony in the real world. As Castronova (2007) and McGonigal (2011) argue, the online game can contribute to change the real world society. The participants of the Long-Underwear Corps learned to resist to the strong through the power of the grassroots in the game world, and then applied their experiences to

attempt to improve real world society. Lee argues that the members of the Long-Underwear Corps are “never-return heroes” from the virtual world (2005b, p. 119), but it seems that these heroes of the online world have already become heroes in real life. The Bartz Liberation War is never-ending story in the real world. In other words, for many people, MMORPGs are one of the field of cultural struggle for hegemony in the real world, and the critical moment begins with the developing the “oppositional reading” (Hall, 1980) of the game by living and experiencing the game world, and expanding it to the real world.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the Bartz Liberation War in *Lineage II*, a grassroots revolution unprecedented in the gaming history of South Korea. Regardless of its result in Bartz, the Bartz Liberation War greatly influenced the gaming industry and gaming culture, and the emergence of the Long-Underwear Corps attracted the attention of the Korean public. After the Bartz Liberation War, a variety of assessments of the war and the Long-Underwear Corps were made. Lee (2005) argued that this was a successful example of mass digital storytelling created by players in the digital age. Myung (2008) argued that it was a great epic, expanding human history into the virtual world (p. 318). Others have criticized it as a story of online game addiction at PC bangs.

This study focused on playing for resistance in the game world, and how this extended to the real world. It first examined the background of development of Korean online games and gaming culture, focusing on MMORPGs. It then determined that *Lineage II* is a cultural product that includes the dominant gaming codes and culture of South Korea, which allow for the “law of jungle,” “power worship,” and a “winner takes all” perspective in the *Lineage II* world. This study argues that the DK clan understood and used those codes and culture to dominate the game world of the Bartz server, and that their brutal domination provoked the resistance of players. These general players then began to develop an oppositional reading of the game world, realizing that the game world was their another world and should be defended by them. Therefore, the unprecedented group of low-level players for resistance, the Long-Underwear Corps appeared, and their activities were supported by players in other servers. They tried to resist the DK, as well as dominant game codes and gaming culture, through creative emergent tactics. Third, although their resistance was failed in Bartz server, but their impact transcended the boundaries

of the server, and of *Lineage II*, expanding to affect real-world culture and society. It indicated the possibility of resistance, transcending the boundary between the virtual and the real world.

This study has tried to show that the game world and gaming culture were not separate from real world culture and society, but were deeply connected, influencing each other. However, it has not fully explained the relationship between the dominant ideologies of society and dominant gaming codes and culture. The South Korean online game industry and culture have developed rapidly since the late 1990s. Korean society was completely changed by the economic catastrophe of 1997, and the discourse of “competition” and “survival” prevailed with the introduction of neo-liberalism. I feel that this social climate deeply influenced dominant gaming codes and culture, and that the DK’s methods of play began with the transformation of Korean society. I therefore suggest that future studies explore the relationship between dominant social ideologies and gaming culture.

In addition, I suggest that further research in the field of game study be carried out on new types of resistance players. Like the Long-Underwear Corps, many players continue to enjoy resisting the strong in the game world. Moving beyond Bartle’s player-type classification, these players appear to be pioneering new means of game play and methods of enjoying gaming. Further research into these players could allow for a more complex understanding of games and game worlds, and could greatly enrich gaming culture.

While the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps could be regarded as unique to *Lineage II*, power gaps between players are evident in many online games, and players can realize this and try to change it. Change can come through complaints to publishers and game designers, but can also be in the form of resistance in the virtual world. Unknown soldiers might be fighting for their own virtual worlds at this very moment.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix A: Images of *Lineage II* world

(from Lineage II's official homepages in Korea and North America:

<http://power.plaync.co.kr/lineage2> and <http://www.lineage2.com>)



Figure 6 *Lineage II*'s map.

1. Aden castle, 2. Dragon Valley, 3. Lair of Antharas, 4. Cruma Tower, 5. Giran castle

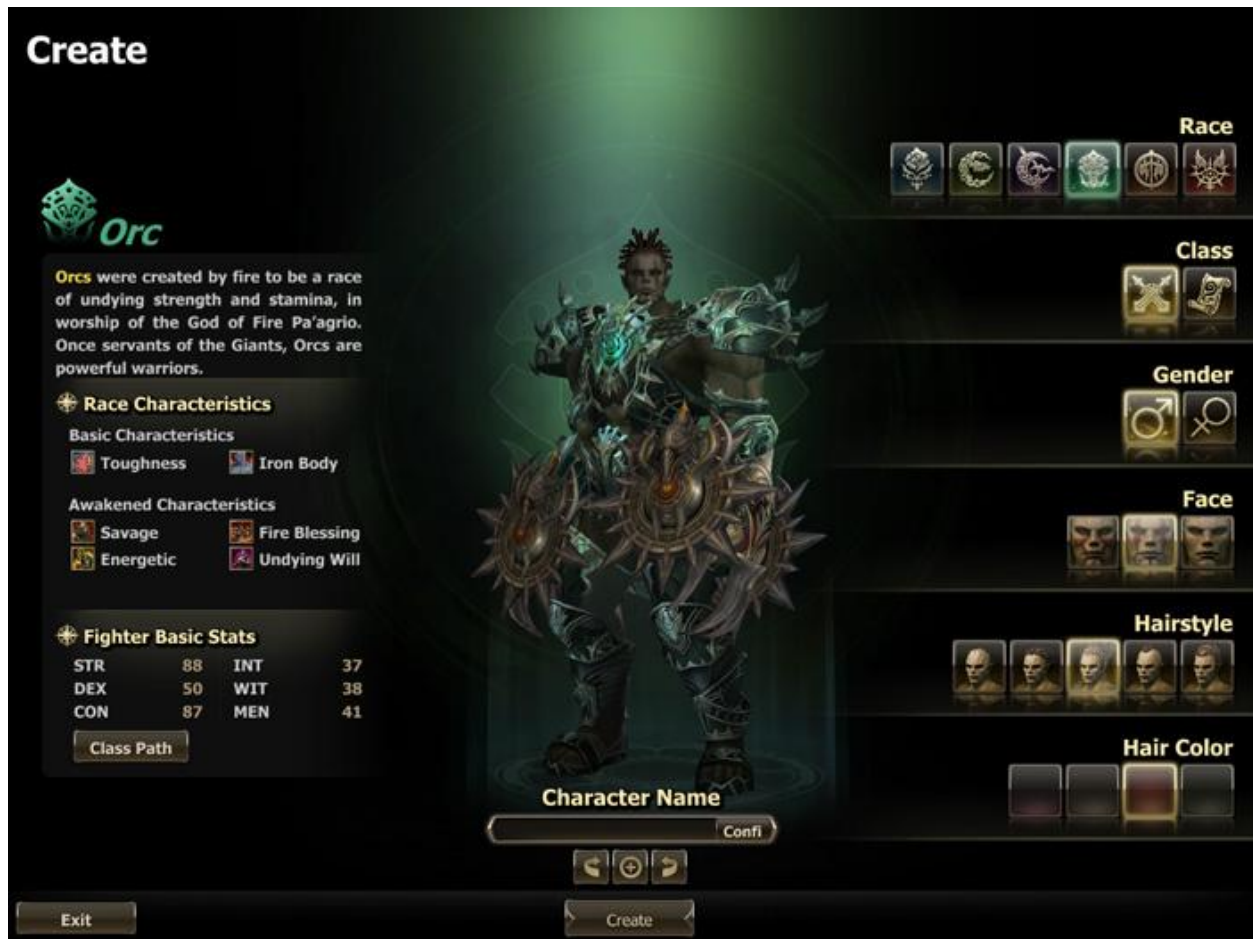


Figure 7 Character Creation.

In the process of character creation, players choose their avatar's race, class, gender, and appearance.



Figure 8 Game Interface.

- 1) Status: HP (Health Points), MP (Mana Points), CP (Combat Points: extra HP for PvP)
- 2) Target: target's name, levels, and other information.
- 3) Menu Bar: In the menu bar, players see the status of their characters or quests, use items, and so on.
- 4) Radar: Radar shows the small map, and locations of other players and mobs
- 5) Shortcut Bars: Players set their frequently using skills and items in the shortcut bars
- 6) Chat: Players can chat with other players in the chat window
- 7) Party: Information of party.



Figure 9 Castle Siege.

Clans can own castles by castle siege system. A clan leader can register castle siege, and the siege begins in the weekend nights. To capture the castle, various tactics and strategies are used. In this image, an attacker's "Siege Golem" is summoned by a Warsmith (high-class of Dwarf) to break through the castle's gate.

7.2 Appendix B: Fan cartoon about Dragon Knights clan



Figure 10 Fan cartoon about Dragon Knights clan.
(from <http://www.thisisgame.com/>)

7.3 Appendix C: Fan cartoon about the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps

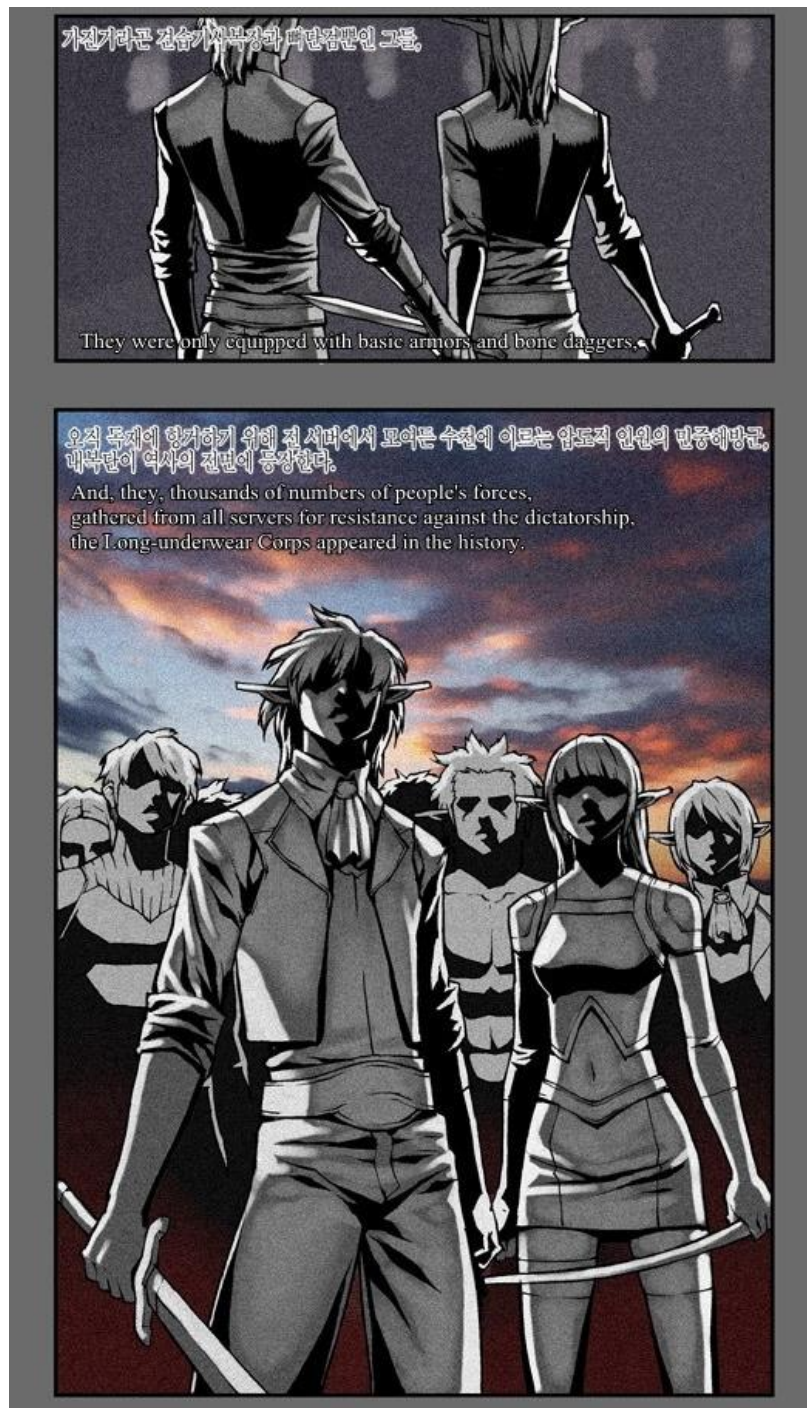




Figure 11 Fan cartoon about the Bartz Liberation War and the Long-Underwear Corps (from the official homepage of *Lineage II*, <http://lineage2.plaync.co.kr>).